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ABSTRACT

The book, the result of a two-year research project on urban adult basic education (ABE) develops comprehensive and analytical descriptions of significant aspects in the ABE program operation and classroom interaction, and the perspectives of those involved. The study was conducted in large city public schools throughout the country, and the information gathered is presented in chapter form, following an introduction stating methodology and rationale: ABE--The Only Game in Town points out divergent objectives and funding on local, State, and Federal levels; Classroom Dynamics describes student diversity, enrollment, conduct, failure syndrome, testing, teaching approaches, and discipline; The Students deals with motivational reasons for enrolling in terms of race, sex, and age; Teachers and Counselors supplies background and salary information, and perceptions of students and curriculum; Paraprofessionals supplies background and funding information, and defines job duties and recruitment--selection process; Directors explores background and perspectives on students, teachers, the program, funding, salary, and status; Hustling the Community discusses variables in achieving funding and facilities; Improving the Odds analyzes program improvements in terms of the students involved. (The dccument is indexed.) (LH)

New Dimensions in Program Analysis

LAST GAMBLE ON EDUCATION

Dynamics of Adult Basic Education

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FOR THE PLAYERS

This book is part of a continuing series of research studies conducted by the Center for Adult Education, Teachers College, Columbia University in the City of New York. This work was performed pursuant to a grant from the U.S. Office of Education, Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. However, the opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the U.S. Office of Education, and no official endorsement by the U.S. Office of Education should be inferred.

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Contents

Acknowledgments

This book is the result of two years of research on adult basic education (ABE) as conducted through the public schools in larger cities in the United States. Our research team, a large one, included Anselm Strauss and Barney Glaser of the University of California Medical Center in San Francisco and their students, Roger Pritchard, Richard Rizzo, Gregory Abbott, John Henry, Frances Katsuranis and James Isida; Eugene Litwak and Donald Warren of the University of Michigan and their students, Roberta Keane, Vernon Moore, Willerfred Wilson, Robert A. Brown and Bernard McLendon; and Blanche Geer at Northeastern University with her students, Ann Sullivan McLaughlin and Gerdes Fleurant. Other faculty colleagues who participated included Leonard Schatzman; University of California Medical Center; Eliot Freidson and Berenice Fisher, New York University; Gladys Engel Lang, State University of New York, Stony Brook; Joan Phillips Gordon, Quinnipiac College, Connecticut; Winthrop Adkins and Thomas Leemon, Teachers College, Columbia University. Lee Rainwater, Harvard, and Jack London, University of California, Berkeley, evaluated our efforts. Ray Ferrier, Director, Division of Adult Education of the Detroit Public Schools, also served as consultant.

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Special recognition should be given the extended analyses of Barney Glaser. Chapter 5 is largely the product of his collaboration with Roger Pritchard, and some of Chapter 2 is derived from his insights.

The work was made possible through the encouragement of Paul Delker, Chief of the Division of Adult Education, U.S. Office of Education. We hope his boldness in playing a long shot on an untried approach to program analysis has paid off for ABE. The research which produced this book was supported by grants administered through his office under authorization of the Adult Education Act of 1966, Section 309(b).

J.M.
G.G.D.
A.B.K.

Introduction

Methodology and Rationale

Beginning in the spring of 1969, the authors, working through the Center for Adult Education at Columbia University's Teachers College, undertook an extraordinary assignment. We agreed to attempt to develop and apply a methodology of scientific inquiry that would illuminate the most significant qualitative aspects of urban adult basic education (ABE) in this country. Our charge was to develop a dependable, comprehensive, and analytical description of significant patterns of program operation and classroom interaction in addition to presenting in an organized fashion the perspectives of those involved.

We believed that if we could do this well, the result would constitute a research-based frame of reference for decision-making that would be of great value in creating a national strategy for ABE program development. Through identification and analysis of the norms involved in program operation, classroom interaction and human motivation, not only could policy priorities, key problems, and promising innovations be delineated with greater confidence, but the planner could also, as the program unfolds, identify specific points at which research and demonstration would most likely provide the greatest payoff.

Moreover, staff development could benefit from such a qualitative analysis. By highlighting recurrent problems of teacher performance, a dependable picture of current practice would constitute the

soundest foundation upon which to build a teacher-training curriculum. Training could then focus directly on both realistic, next-step improvements based on the specific skills and practices commonly found in the classroom, as well as on less common but promising innovative practices.

Program evaluation based upon these norms could also benefit by identifying critical areas of decision-making and key questions which need to be asked in assessing program achievement. The evaluator could become more aware of the ways and reasons why program objectives have been modified to fit experience. Qualitative data can help him understand how priorities are ordered in assessing program consequences and the relationships between program achievements and program practices. These insights are indispensable in applying evaluation findings to improve adult basic education.

So the game seemed worth the candle, but the task of systematically capturing the complex and changing reality of urban ABE programs required an unprecedented effort. Not only was it necessary to secure comparative data about program structure and operation from many cities, but we had to select and devise procedures to understand and generalize about evolving processes of interaction among students, staff, and administrators that would explain the ways of program practice. And for this to be intelligible, we had to see ABE as it is perceived by those most directly involved. Only then could priorities for planned program change be charted with confidence.

To be useful to decision makers, generalizations based on this body of data must enable adult educators to better understand and predict organizational dynamics and the behavior of students and staff in ABE programs. Fully developed, such a set of generalizations would constitute an inductively constructed theory of practice specific to urban ABE programs as they operate in the public schools.*

*Glaser and Strauss see as the functions of theory: (1) to enable prediction and explanation of behavior; (2) to be useful in theoretical advance; (3) to be usable in practical applications — prediction and explanation should be able to give the practitioner understanding and some control of situations; (4) to provide a perspective on behavior — a stance to be taken toward data; and (5) to guide and provide a style for research on particular areas of behavior. Thus theory is a strategy for handling data in research, providing modes of conceptualization for describing and explaining. (*The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*, Chicago: Aldine Press, 1967, p.3.)

Toward a Theory of Practice

The relationship of research to theory construction has been tenuous. Results have been either too specific or too general to provide practitioners with practical guidance. For example, Brunner's major review of research in adult education[1] found most studies limited to descriptions of a single program or community or to prescriptive analyses of local situations. (The six hundred empirical studies that were summarized deal largely with interests and motivations, characteristics of participants and leaders, and roles of adult educators.) Findings could seldom be applied beyond the case or situation studied. We hoped to demonstrate a different approach for using research to permit useful generalizations.

We then had to decide how to proceed with the job of reliably depicting the most important ways students, teachers, and administrators interact in the larger cities as well as their own understanding of why they behave as they do. We wanted to prepare a descriptive analysis, one that would have explanatory and predictive value, of key qualitative factors that could be fashioned from insightful generalizations about evolving programs.

The seminal idea was found in Glaser's and Strauss's methodology of grounded theory.[2] They advocate inductive development of theory through comparative analysis of typically similar group situations, such as classrooms. The researcher goes to the field as an observer and an interviewer with a minimum of predetermined theoretical assumptions. Although the grounded theory researcher avoids approaching his study with any particular theoretical bias or predetermined hypothesis to test, he commonly has a highly flexible "orienting framework" made up of what Glaser and Strauss describe as "processual units." They are similar to what Herbert Blumer calls "analytical elements" and Lazersfeld "sensitizing concepts." These may be processes, organization, relations, networks of relations, states of being, elements of personal organization, or happenings that serve to form initial inquiry. In studying a series of comparable situations, the researcher seeks out similarities and differences and then continues to explore and differentiate them in subsequent field work. The resulting conceptual categories must "fit" (be readily applicable to and representative of the data) and "work" (be relevant and able to explain behavior being studied.) Categories and their attributes are continuously tested for validity by analyzing them against comparable as well as contrasting situations, and by modifying them to take changing conditions into account. Additional data may be found in historical records, letters and diaries, life histories, public records, professional literature, arranged group discussions, and

review of relevant personal experience. Grounded theory generated in this way should become a useful set of related generalizations of various levels of abstraction which are continually in the process of refinement and restatement through testing against an ever broader segment of reality.

Becker, Geer, and Hughes developed a somewhat more detailed framework for undertaking their field study of undergraduate students at the University of Kansas. They each chose to study an aspect of college life from the viewpoint of students. "If we do not see it as they do — as a dense network of social relationships, institutional demands and constraints, and temporarily connected contingencies — we will not be able to understand what they do."[3]

Their organizing concept was "perspective," which refers to people's actions as well as their stated ideas accompanying these actions. Components include (1) definition of the situation (what the world is like to them) and the level of importance attributed to various features of the situation, including what it allows one to do and insists that he do, why he is in the situation, and what he can reasonably get out of it); (2) activities proper and reasonable to engage in given the situation (actions taken to gather information about the environment — such as expectations of others, how one is meeting these demands, how one is regarded, and rewards and punishments one can expect — and actions taken to meet expectations of others, both institutional and informal); and (3) criteria of judgment (standards of value against which people are judged). The definition of the situation has four major features: (1) statement of goals for which one may reasonably strive, (2) description of the organizations within which action occurs and their demands upon participants, (3) formal and informal rules by which action is constrained, and (4) rewards and punishments.

Methodology of the Study

We decided to adapt these ideas to our analysis of urban ABE program practice. A first year's study was planned in which we analyzed three interrelated dimensions: *program organization and functioning*, which profoundly influenced and were influenced by *the process of classroom interaction*, and *the perspectives and characteristics of those involved*, which, in turn, helped to explain the "why" of classroom interaction. It seemed particularly critical to see what was hapenning from the point of view of ABE students because efforts to improve the program depend on improving their performance. We wanted to know how students see the program, themselves in it, the teachers, and other students; why they feel

they are there; what they think is in it for them; what they feel they must or can do in it; and their perceptions of incentives and constraints.

The study was comparative, and used field and survey methods in a new way. We selected six cities for field work: New York, Boston, Detroit, San Francisco, San Jose, and Washington, D.C. A team from Columbia conducted 105 one- to two-hour structured interviews with program administrators and staff members in the six cities to understand how urban ABE is organized and the dynamics of administration, supervision, and counseling. Those interviewed included the ABE director, his immediate superior within the school system, supervisors, counselors, and some experienced teachers.

To get at dynamics of classroom interaction and perspectives, an approach was devised that we termed "synchronic induction." Through collaborative effort with sociologists* at the University of California Medical Center, University of Michigan, and Northeastern University, teams of participant observers were attached to Title III ABE programs in five of the six cities studied for a period of eight months.** A team from Columbia studied Title III in New York City. The California team studied programs in both San Francisco and San Jose. The Northeastern team worked in Boston, and the Michigan team in Detroit. Teams were composed of from one to three graduate students in sociology who worked on a half-time basis under the supervision of a faculty member with extensive experience in field research methods. Team members had no previous familiarity with the program to be studied nor commitments to predetermined theoretical ideas about what data might prove of most importance in understanding ABE.

Each team was assigned a random sample of ABE classes, stratified to include classes in both basic adult education and English as a second laguage. Field workers' observations regarding the interactions within the sample's fifty-nine classes were reviewed every two weeks by the supervising sociologist and forwarded to the project office at Teachers College. After some time in the field, observers also acted as interviewers before and after classes and during breaks, informally gathering information on perspectives of both students and staff.

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*Anselm Strauss, Eugene Litwak, and Blanche Geer, respectively. Lee Rainwater of Harvard was program evaluator.

**The Teachers College team subsequently spent a week studying ABE in a sixth city, Washington, D.C., to assess the practical utility of knowledge gained in understanding the most important aspects of ABE program operation.

From these data a separate team of analysts identified patterns of program operation, interaction, and perspectives. Patterns that emerged were tested against the experience of field workers in all other locations; and when mediating factors were reported in one place, they, too, were investigated by the entire network of field researchers to find out if they were occurring elsewhere. If, for example, analysts noted that two or three field workers had observed more friction between teachers and aides when the aide was recruited from the neighborhood in which the class was located, all field workers were asked to examine this relationship. If an investigator reported an apparent exception to this pattern of interaction when teachers and their aides had participated together in in-service training, this mediating factor would also be tested throughout the field network. In this way conceptual categories were established and their attributes delineated.

Field workers were free to investigate other classes as the need for theoretical sampling arose.[4] This simply meant that if a question came up, for example regarding relationships between teachers and aides that seemed relevant to understanding the dynamics of classroom interaction, the field worker might observe classes other than those included in the original sample if sample classes had too few aides in them for comparative purposes.

Synchronizing field observation and analysis, with each of these functions assigned to teams of different individuals, enabled us to apply conventional criteria of reliability and validity in the analysis of data obtained through field methods. It also allowed us to generalize with greater assurance of validity. Errors in perception or arbitrary judgment by a field observer were corrected because we had to reconcile them with reports of other observers who looked at similar activities in different places. Because several observers were in the field at the same time, apparent similarities and differences in their observations could be checked further through the field network.

Similarly, the use of several analysts, each independently reading the same set of field observations, contributed to both the richness and the reliability of the interpretation. (Analytical assertions were doubly checked with field workers.) Hence, a way was found to correct for faulty presuppositions, distorted inference and concepts and biased analysis.[5]

Two national surveys were undertaken to test the universality of selected findings and to provide additional quantitative data.[6] The first involved public school ABE directors in cities over 100,000 in population. Of 130 cities reported by the 1960 census to be of this

size, 118 operated Title III programs through the public schools.* A questionnaire was mailed to all 118 directors in the spring of 1970. Returns were received from 100 directors, 85 percent of the total. The questionnaire covered organization and administration, staffing, counseling, finances, facilities, program practices, attitudes, and personal characteristics of directors.

ABE teachers in cities of over 100,000 were surveyed in spring 1971. Preliminary 1970 census data had identified 150 cities of over 100,000; we determined that 119 of these cities had public school ABE programs. The 119 cities were listed in rank order by population, and even-numbered cities were selected for the sample. Complete lists of ABE teachers were obtained from directors in 50 of the 59 sample cities, and the nine directors who were unable to supply lists agreed to distribute the questionnaire. The total sample consisted of 1,900 teachers. Returns were received from 1,135, or 60 percent.** The ten page questionnaire contained thirty-three items on the nature of program involvement, goals and curricular emphasis, problems, perceptions of students, use of aides, administrative relationships, in-service training, opinions of the program, and personal characteristics of teachers.

Both questionnaires had been revised on the basis of extensive pre-tests, and each involved two follow-up appeals. A remarkable degree of agreement was found between the survey results and the findings produced by synchronic induction in the six cities originally studied.

Several additional steps were taken to further test and refine our findings. One was a day-long group interview conducted seven months into the first year of our study. This involved six experienced ABE administrators from New York, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey. They reviewed with us our tentative conclusions about organizational dynamics and indicated that these interpretations were consistent with their experience.

Data collected and reviewed at this stage of the study provided the basis for a coding scheme for the initial classification and analysis of field data. Our original "analytical units" for classroom interaction included type of class, helping patterns, encouraging patterns, teacher control, intensity of engagement, socialization

*At the time of this survey, 1970 census data was not available.

**To gauge possible non-response bias, a follow-up study of forty-seven randomly selected non-respondents found negligible differences on key variables.

patterns, methods, materials and content, student characteristics, teacher characteristics, student perspectives, and teacher perspectives. Specific patterns of interaction, such as "Student Helps Student," were coded to permit assessment of frequency and context of occurrence. A simplified version of the analytical framework of Becker, Geer, and Hughes was used for coding data on participant and teacher perspective. Categories included sources of information, expectations and opinions about the program, expectations and viewpoints about objectives, awareness of job and educational alternatives, and community resources. These and other items included in the coding scheme resulted from preliminary adumbration of patterns of interaction or perspective from early analysis of field notes.

A total of 237 sets of field reports were coded using the scheme described above. Coded incidents from the reports were pasted on McBee Key Sort cards, which were punched by code numbers corresponding to the coding scheme. Context variables such as type and location of class were also coded and punched to facilitate data analysis.

Coders participated in several intensive training sessions to clarify the meaning of categories and to resolve ambiguities of interpretation. A reliability check indicated that intercoder agreement was 76 percent. Some coders tended to assign certain data to a wider range of categories than did others. Considering our purposes, this was not a serious problem.

In our second year, a series of comparative field studies were undertaken, one by each of our colleagues in the three collaborating universities as well as one by ourselves. Through our survey of directors, we had identified cities in which certain promising program practices were in operation. We wanted to understand why these particular practices had developed in some programs and how they might be adapted in others. Our research purpose was to identify organizational, programmatic and interactional factors that impeded or facilitated adoption and development of the selected practices so we could then develop guidelines for planners.

Each team studied a specific practice in six cities over a five-month period.* The California team studied use of paraprofessionals in the classroom in Los Angeles, Tucson, Denver, Sacramento,

*In the second year of the study Blanche Geer continued as faculty supervisor at Northeastern, Donald Warren replaced Eugene Litwak at Michigan, and Barney Glaser replaced Anselm Strauss at California. Jack London, University of California, Berkeley, served as project evaluator.

Berkeley, and San Jose. Michigan studied co-sponsorship of classes with employers in Chicago, Detroit, Fort Wayne, Saint Louis, Lansing, and Cincinnati. Northeastern, and subsequently Columbia, studied uses of learning laboratories in Richmond, Erie, Syracuse, Worcester, Camden, and Albany. Columbia studied community liaison practices in Nashville, Providence, Hartford, Yonkers, Cleveland, and Boston. The team doing each study conducted both field work and analysis. But again provision was made for independent secondary analyses of field data by others — sociologists, adult educators, and ABE practitioners.

A final major test of the validity of our emerging theory of practice in ABE was its critical review by 130 urban ABE directors and two dozen professors of adult education who participated in four regional workshops that were held just two years from the beginning of the project, in May and early June, 1971. Two-day workshops were conducted in New York, San Francisco, Chicago, and New Orleans. Principal action implications of the findings for urban directors were detailed in a 38 page working paper and carefully reviewed by participants against their own experience. These discussions were tape recorded and the study's findings were revised to incorporate the resulting insights.

Our methodology, *synchronic induction*, was designed to provide a reliable basis for formulating a comprehensive rationale upon which to map a national strategy of program development and resource allocation. The approach may be applied to any large-scale program of human resource and community development or for analyzing and planning programs of more limited scope in education, health, or manpower development.

This methodology provided a useful framework for our study of urban ABE programs and practices. The frame of reference produced by this effort has subsequently been used by the authors as a foundation for the development of models for program evaluation and for dissemination and utilization of results of experimental and demonstration projects. *An Evaluation Guide for Adult Basic Education Programs* was published by the U.S. Government Printing Office in 1974. Monographs concerned with innovation dissemination have also been recently published.[7]

Our intent in the chapters which follow is not only to present the findings of our research on adult basic education, but to demonstrate the application of synchronic induction and grounded theory combined with survey methods in the analysis of an educational program of national scope.

Notes

1. Edmund de S. Brunner, et al., *An Overview of Adult Education Research* (Chicago: Adult Education Association), 1959.
2. Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research* (Chicago: Aldine Press, 1967), p. 3.
3. Howard S. Becker, Blanche Geer, and Everett Hughes, *Making the Grade: The Academic Side of College Life* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1968), p. 2.
4. Glaser and Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory,* Chapt. 3.
5. For an analysis of other uses of "multiple triangulation" in social research, see Norman K. Denzin, *The Research Act* (Chicago: Aldine Press, 1970).
6. The advantages of combining field and survey techniques in a single study are cogently set forth by Sam Sieber. See his paper, "The Integration of Fieldwork and Survey Methods," *American Journal of Sociology,* 78 (May, 1973): 1335-1359.
7. For the full report of this research, see Gordon G. Darkenwald, et al., *Problems of Dissemination and Use of Innovations in Adult Basic Education* (New York: Center for Adult Education, Columbia University, 1974). For an in-depth analysis of R&D and demonstration projects in adult basic education, see Harold W. Beder and Gordon G. Darkenwald, *Development, Demonstration, and Dissemination: Case Studies of Selected Special Projects in Adult Basic Education* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Publications in Continuing Education, 1974).

Chapter One

ABE— The Only Game in Town

The rich gamble on the stock market and on property values; the poor gamble on long shots — the lottery, numbers, and sometimes education. It isn't easy to part with a buck or a fiver to make a wild bet when you have next to nothing to fall back on, but there is a kind of dignity to the human condition that prompts an impoverished loser who has never won a bet to damn the odds and invest something in the future anyway. The quality is hope. A long shot is an act of faith.

One of the newer games of chance now open to the poor involves a hefty wager, unknown odds, ambiguous rules, and a pot of uncertain value. Despite these limitations, there's plenty of action — over 800,000 players placed their bets in 1973. For those taking a last chance on education, it's the only game in town. ABE, adult basic education, is the name of the game, and it is bankrolled by the public schools. You have to be over sixteen, out of school, and have less than eighth-grade literacy to play.*

There is a bedazzling number of potential players. Fifteen million Americans, twenty-five years and over, had completed less than

*In 1970 Congress authorized extension through high school completion, but failed to appropriate implementing funds. In 1974 new legislation finally permitted the states to spend up to twenty percent of their federal allocations on adult high school programs.

eight grades in 1971 — nearly one out of seven. About half of these never made it past fourth grade. Another thirty-three million completed eighth grade, but not high school. Close to a million and a half Americans over age fourteen were reported totally illiterate in 1969; and if you were black, your chances of being so afflicted were three times greater than if you were white.[1]

Though rent with violent domestic strife fed by an intensely unpopular foreign war, the 1960's were graced with a recrudescent concern for humanitarian and democratic values. Civil liberties, peace, popular participation, educational relevance, institutional renewal, and consistency in social values between word and deed commanded widely shared commitments to action. "The asphalt road and a thousand lost golf balls" as an American legacy was bitterly rejected by the young. Powerful social forces and substantial resources were mobilized to attack poverty, racial and sexual inequality, health and consumer problems, illiteracy, and other ancient shadows on the human spirit. No level of education remained untouched, and federally funded adult basic education was a product of these active reformist impulses.

This fact is reflected in its conception as an integral element of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, at the forefront of the Johnsonian War on Poverty. With the advent of federal support for public education in the year following, ABE became Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, known as the Adult Education Act of 1966. Administratively, the program shifted from the Office of Economic Opportunity to the Division of Adult Education, U.S. Office of Education. In 1974, ABE became Title VI of the Education Amendments of 1974. The new legislation simply extended the provisions of the Adult Education Act, adding a few amendments. Some of the added features include provision for bilingual adult education programs and programs for institutionalized adults and the establishment of state advisory councils on adult education. In addition, the new legislation gave the state education departments direct control over funds to be used for experimental demonstration projects and staff development activities. These discretionary funds were formerly administered by the U.S. Office of Education. Although ABE may some day become known as "Title VI," we shall continue to refer to it as Title III, a term that is now established as part of the vocabulary of adult education.

Directions

The focus of the Act is "education for adults whose inability to speak, read or write the English language constitutes a substantial

impairment of their ability to get or retain employment commensurate with their real ability." By legal definition, ABE means education designed to: (1) "help eliminate such inability . . ."; (2) "raise the level of education of such individuals . . ."; (3) "improve their ability to benefit from occupational training and otherwise increase their opportunities for more productive and profitable employment"; and (4) "make them better able to meet their adult responsibility."[2] The Office of Education interprets that broad mandate to include "instruction in communicative, computational and social skills."[3] First priority is set on instruction at fifth-grade level and below.[4]

While "literacy" is obviously central, it is universally defined beyond mere academic skill acquisition to include practical application in activities that have meaning to the learner. By international standards, a man is functionally literate when he can

> engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for effective functioning in his group and community, and whose attainments in reading, writing and arithmetic make it possible for him to continue to use those skills toward his own and the community's development.[5]

In the United States, with seventh-grade reading ability you may be able to understand simple newspaper stories and personal articles in digest magazines. But it would not help you much to read a lease, an installment plan, or a set of income-tax instructions.[6] Moreover, gearing ABE to grade-level equivalents is a dubious practice. A sensible alternative would replace grade equivalency with a clear delineation of adult reading requisites and related functional goals:

> Income tax forms, driving instructions, job application forms, television guides and newspapers, among others would be analyzed to derive a precise definition of adult reading level, which could then become the articulated aim of literacy instruction. Functional aspects of the programs should be clearly delinated and their relationship to literacy defined.[7*]

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*A Louis Harris study, recently commissioned by the National Reading Center, measured ability to read and answer questions about (1) direct long-distance instructions from a telephone directory, (2) classified newspaper advertisements, and (3) a composite standard application form. A national sample of Americans aged 17 and older and a special sample of 16 year olds were tested. Over 5.6 million people 16 years and older were unable to read more than 20 percent of such questionnaire items as "What is the color of your eyes?" and "How long have you lived at your present address?" Another 15.5 million failed on more than 10 percent

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A National Advisory Council on Adult Education, established under the Adult Education Act to review federal ABE programs and recommend policy, specifies four "attainable goals" for Title III: (1) "getting a job or moving to a better job"; (2) "enhancing self-esteem"; (3) "increasing civic responsibility in community, state and national affairs"; and (4) "active self-development through continuing education and further sharpening of job skills."[8]

Program achievements are often cited in behavioral terms. The council points to numbers who learned to read and write for the first time, used public libraries, found jobs, received raises or were promoted, entered job training programs, opened bank accounts for the first time, became subscribers to newspapers or magazines, left welfare rolls and became self-supporting, and helped their children with school assignments.[9] Although cause-effect relationships between ABE and such behavior are difficult to establish, clearly broad goals have been set for the program at the national level.

These are echoed in state plans. New York specifies "self-direction," "profitable employment," "knowledge concerning proper handling of . . . finances, good health and nutritional practices, viable parent-child relationships, and the rights and responsibilities of citizenship." ABE is to help students build their "self-image" and "overcome their sense of inadequacy in the whole society."[10]

There are a few purgatives more sobering for vaulting ambitions of reform than their translation into the anemic language of the traditional curriculum. The bold call for new educational horizons for a vast, challenging new clientele becomes reduced in a 1966 Office of Education guide to reading, handwriting, spelling, listening and speaking, arithmetic, "social living" (basic information about the country, locality, institutions, and individual rights), "everyday science" (personal hygiene and diet), and the arts. *Sic transit gloria.*

In local practice, program objectives range from "the 3 R's period" to teaching socially oppressed adults skills for coping with

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of the items, and 1.4 million missed every item — were totally illiterate. Harris found differences in scores relating to age, income, occupation, race, region and size of community. The factor most closely related to performance on the questionnaire, however, was educational level. Only 25 percent of those with eighth grade education or less scored perfectly (vs. 46 percent of high school graduates), and 16 percent failed on more than 20 percent of the items compared with only 3 percent of those with some high school who scored this poorly. National Reading Center, "A Nationwide Survey of Adult Reading Skills" (Washington, D.C.: Adult Reading Development, the Center, n.d.)

the system. And one hears arguments by some who read into the language of the Adult Education Act a priority for subordinating ABE to vocational training, so that vocabulary learned is specific to occupational skills being taught.

Resources

State-initiated program plans are annually approved by the Office of Education, which allocates to each state basic grants of $100,000. Additional funds are distributed according to size of state populations over sixteeen years of age with six grades of schooling or less. Ten percent matching funds from within the state are required. Some states and localities sugar the pot with additional money for ABE. The federal ante was over $63 million for 1974, up sharply from $34 million appropriated for 1966 but far short of the $300 million recommended by the National Advisory Council as a "minimum requirement to meet demonstrated need." The ABE game is open in all fifty states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, the Virgin Islands, and the Pacific trust territories.

States dispense money and supervise program operations, but the action is local, and it varies considerably from city to city and state to state. Most programs operate two types of classes: basic adult education (BEd) geared to the 3 R's and to native-born adults, and English as a second language (ESL). A few cities offer only one type or the other. Day or evening classes may be centralized in a few schools or widely dispersed in several. Or they may be located in church basements, storefronts, union halls, prisons, and manufacturing plants; they are often co-sponsored by a community group or employer. Learning laboratories, based on self-instruction with programmed materials, reading machines, and other equipment are increasingly common in larger programs, but only rarely are they used without some classroom instruction. Generally, classes are organized at three levels, beginning (grades 1-3), intermediate (4-6) and advanced (7-8). There is little uniformity among states in content or length of courses. No stipends are provided students by the program, although some participants receive stipends from other sources.

Programs operated by most states and cities were penny ante prior to the infusion of federal funds. In 1843, Massachusetts appropriated seventy-five dollars for an evening school, and most states still spend a comparably meager proportion of their school budgets for elementary adult education. An enlightened few now include adult students in cost-reimbursement formulas to local school districts, but the organization charts of most state departments of

education showed no slot for adult education until the 1960's.[11]

Some cities have appropriated money for adult education since the middle 1800's. Evening schools, primarily for employed school-age youth, were a common feature in large cities by the Civil War, and by the turn of the century these had become predominately elementary and high schools for adults. Around World War I the states got nervous about heavy immigration from southern Europe, and forty of them set up Americanization programs, an ephemeral interest for most. In the decade following the depression, large-scale emergency adult education programs were established by independent new agencies outside the public schools.

The McCarran-Walter Act, which required demonstrated literacy competence as a legal requisite for citizenship, produced some renewed interest in metropolitan schools in the early fifties. The 1950 census reported 10 million illiterates, less than one-third of them foreign born; 26 million over twenty-five years old had failed to complete elementary school. At least two million people were enrolled in public school adult education at that time, but enrollment in Americanization and elementary education courses was ranked only sixth. Most popular were courses for the more advanced and advantaged in civic and public affairs, commercial and distributive education, vocational and technical education, general secondary education, and homemaking education.[12] Although major port cities like New York, Boston, and San Francisco have operated Americanization and elementary adult education programs since the latter half of the nineteenth century — and our national survey established that 62 percent of the largest cities had conducted programs prior to federal support — this was atypical. Only 37.5 percent of the small cities had programs before 1965.*

So for most school systems, federal funds for adult basic education in 1966 meant launching a bold new venture, one for which they were ill prepared. A few cities, such as Boston and San Francisco, simply expanded existing programs, but most started from scratch. In a few states the public schools were bypassed and the programs administered by community colleges or area vocational-technical schools. The state education agency, which decides all this, is charged with responsibility for all aspects of the operation of local programs — planning, administration, supervision, teacher training, curriculum development, evaluation and fiscal accounting.

*The largest cities are those over 150,000; small ones are 100,000 to 150,000.

Until recently up to 20 percent of the federal ABE appropriation was directly invested by the U.S. Office of Education in grant programs for training and demonstration projects. A series of national training institutes conducted during the first six years of operation involved over 8,000 teachers, teacher-trainers, administrators, counselors, and university resource personnel. In 1971, there were 35 institutes with over 2,500 participants. Colleges, universities, and educational organizations were awarded grants to undertake this work. Subsequently, staff development funds were allocated to the ten USOE regions, and regional organizations sponsored a variety of training programs for ABE staff. These funds are now administered directly by the states.

Special experimental demonstration projects "involve the use of innovative methods, systems, materials, or programs . . . or involve programs of adult education . . . (of) unusual promise in promoting a comprehensive or coordinated approach to the problems of persons with basic educational deficiencies." In 1974, grants of almost $7 million supported 47 special projects. Selected school systems and universities, along with private non-profit agencies, participated to develop (among other things) instructional materials, experimental program designs, and administrative systems.* In 1974, Congress transferred authority for such projects from the U.S. Office of Education to the state education departments.

ABE programs are by no means limited to what goes on in the schools under Title III. A 1968 survey reported that a dozen federal departments sponsored about thirty programs involving instruction "to provide adults with proficiency in the fundamental ability to comprehend, communicate and compute."[13] The Department of Health, Education and Welfare funded eight programs in addition to Title III under such units as Administration on Aging, Cuban Refugee Program, Rehabilitation Services, and Vocational Rehabilitation. Labor, until recently, had over half a dozen including Manpower Development and Training (MDT), Concentrated Employment Program (CEP), New Careers, Job Opportunities in the Business Sector (JOBS), Neighborhood Youth Corps (NYC), Work Incentives Now Program (WIN), and Job Corps. WIN and Job Corps still exist, but the other programs have been replaced by the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) which provides flexi-

*For a comprehensive study of this program, see Gordon G. Darkenwald, et al., *Problems of Dissemination and Use of Innovations in Adult Basic Education* (New York: Center for Adult Education, Columbia University, 1974).

bility at the local level in the use of federal funds for job-related education and training. Six programs were sponsored by Defense, three by the Veterans Administration, and others by the Cooperative Extension Service (Agriculture); Bureau of Indian Affairs (Interior), Bureau of Prisons and Immigration and Naturalization Service (Justice), and Departments of Transportation and Commerce. Department of Labor programs such as WIN often contract with the public schools to provide ABE instruction. More than 600 nongovernmental agencies are reported active in ABE as well, prominent among which are Laubach Literacy, Inc., Church Women United, Literacy Volunteers of America, and the National Affiliation for Literacy Advance.[14]

In all, there are probably about three million adults gambling on ABE in one sort of game or another in the United States at the present time.[15] While more probably play the numbers, taking a last chance on education is still a big-time operation.

Notes

1. U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1972* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1972), pp. 111, 113.
2. Rules and Regulations for the Adult Education Act of 1966, *Federal Register*, 32, No. 77:6277.
3. Office of Education, U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, "Standard Terminology for Instruction in Local and State School Systems: An Analysis of Instructional Content, Resources, and Processes," compiled by John F. Putnam and W. Dale Chrismore (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1967).
4. Rules and Regulations for the Adult Education Act of 1966.
5. A UNESCO definition quoted by David Harman in "Illiteracy: An Overview," *Harvard Educational Review*, 40 (May 1970):227.
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8. National Advisory Committee on Adult Basic Education, "Strengthening the Foundation of Our Democratic Society, Second Annual Report" (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, August 1969), p. 2.
9. Ibid, p. 1.
10. New York State Bureau of Basic Continuing Education, *Advisory Bulletin*, No. 3 (April 1965), p. 1; ibid, No. 6, pp. 1-2.
11. John B. Holden, "Adult Education and the Public Schools," in *Education in the States: Nationwide Development since 1900* (Washington, D.C.: National Education Association, 1969), p. 345.

12. Robert A. Luke, "Public School Adult Education," in *Handbook of Adult Education in the United States*, ed. Malcolm S. Knowles (Chicago: Adult Education Association of the U.S.A., 1960), p. 345.
13. Greenleigh Associates, Inc., *Inventory of Federally Supported Adult Education Programs*, Report to the President's National Advisory Committee on Adult Basic Education, January 1968.
14. Richard Cortwright and Edward W. Brice, "Adult Basic Education," in *Handbook of Adult Education*, ed. Robert M. Smith, George F. Aker, and J.R. Kidd (New York: Macmillan, 1970), p. 416.
15. Based on extrapolations from a recent national survey of adult learning conducted by the Educational Testing Service. For the complete report, see K. Patricia Cross and John R. Valley, *Planning Non-Traditional Programs* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1974), Chapt. 2.

Chapter 2

Classroom Dynamics

A range of diversity of student participants probably unprecedented in American education is the most significant distinguishing characteristic of ABE classes. The policy of free open enrollment to all over the age of sixteen has brought together an astonishing potpourri of ethnic backgrounds, educational achievement (from total illiterates in any language to Ph.D.'s with limited English mastery), ages (adolescence to old age), generation of citizenship (first, second, third, and so on), middle to lower-lower socioeconomic classes, native ability (from clearly retarded to exceptionally bright), and a psychiatric range from quite disturbed to normal. Although distributed unequally among classes, a principal educational consequence of this marked diversity is that in few classes do participants form true groups, share experiences, and in so doing teach each other, unless some mechanism is introduced into the program to make this possible. It seldom is in practice.

ABE is a loner's game, a result of which is that teachers cannot count on the process of socialization as an educational force for evolving shared values and inducing attitude change. Participants, by and large, come individually, leave individually, and largely fail to socialize even during class breaks. Most "know" each other mainly on the level of recognition alone. They say, "You know, it is very hard to get formally introduced around here at all. You know a

lot of teachers, but as far as students, sometimes you never find out their first names."*

To the query, "Do you talk to others after class or during breaks, or do they help you with your homework?" the answer is "No, I just leave. I think it is very individualized, at least that is the way I feel."

Such grouping or pairing that does go on within and outside the classroom is commonly by ethnic groups, sex, age, country of origin, and prior association in the relatively few cases where this exists (as in co-sponsored classes held in neighborhood churches). There is wide variation among students' ideas regarding the meaning of the school and of the learning experience.

The teacher, always pressured to maintain enrollment and to "reach" those among the educationally deprived who need help most, must accept everyone. And keep them. Students in ABE are under heavy competing pressures that interfere with an extended commitment to the educational program. Countervailing pressures include unstable jobs, fatigue, family responsibilities, residential mobility, the need to supplement principal sources of income, and involvement with public agencies. They reinforce a natural reluctance to admit educational inadequacies and to again confront the possibility of failure. Other factors which limit enrollment and sustained attendance include class location and scheduling, transportation costs and distances, the threat of being criminally accosted at night in inner-city locations, and lack of child-care facilities.

One of the problems inherent in "bringing the classroom to the learner" is that frequently only one or a few classes are located in any one place. This means that participants at every level of academic achievement up to eighth grade must be accommodated in the same class. When the demand is sufficient to warrant several classes on one site or in a convenient geographical area, ABE classes are generally divided into three levels of instruction. BEd classes include grade levels 1-3, 4-6, or 7-8; ESL classes usually are designated "beginning," "intermediate," and "advanced." Some large adult day schools further differentiate levels and classes by elementary school subject designations. Most programs involve class cycles of 100-200 hours of instruction. Only about half the teachers in urban programs teach only BEd and most at more than one level. In a third of the urban programs ESL and BEd are never separated.

*All quotations are the observations or commentaries of participant observers selected from their field reports.

For ABE teachers, confronted with this extraordinary diversity and highly tentative student commitment, a distinctive set of conventions and practices or rules of the game has emerged.

The Tyranny of Attendance

No leitmotif is more consistently haunting than the emphasis placed by ABE teachers on attendance — recording it and reporting it. They are made to feel, with justification, that this is *the* criterion of administrative judgment concerning their success in attracting and particularly holding participants. The pressure derives from the numbers game played by the Office of Education in justifying Congressional expenditures and by state officials who add or subtract local allocations according to where funds can "best" be used. In states that apply an average daily attendance formula to adult classes as the basis for state aid, pressure on the teacher is further intensified. ABE directors are comforted by comparing local performance to a mythical 50 percent dropout rate established by conventional wisdom.

Consequently, great care is taken with the mechanics of recording attendance. Aides are given this as a priority task of classroom management, and teachers commonly check several times during each class period to determine whether late arrivals have been recorded and whether attendance is off from the last meeting.

A consistent effort is made to ascertain the reasons for absences. Teachers not uncommonly telephone and otherwise attempt to contact absentees to find out why they are out and when they will return to class. They query other students and ask them to contact those who are out. Teachers greet students who return after missing a class by asking, "Were you sick?" and make a point of explaining excused absences to their class: "Judy had trouble getting across town."

Teachers take umbrage:

Mrs. C. seems to make frequent "subtle" digs to her students to indicate disapproval. For example, she commented to two or three students who had missed some of the previous classes, "You were absent, so it will probably be harder for you to get this," or "You will probably have difficulty with the definitions since you missed some of the classes in which we talked about this material."

Teachers threaten:

Mrs. C. asked some of the students if they had seen George, and whether or not he was at school today. The students indicated that he was in the gym or somewhere. Mrs. C. remarked, "He acts just like a spoiled child!" She then commented that she, or someone else, would get rid of him if this behavior continued.

Teachers plead:

> He asked the students not to let him down by not showing up at class as had been done to him one time. The time to which he referred was last quarter. He had told the students that the exercise was going to be held on that coming Thursday, and absolutely no one showed up. He went around the class and asked for a commitment from each of the students to be there on Thursday for the exercise. Most gave the commitment. Several, however, laughed, somewhat embarrassed, and said nothing. These few he tried to convince, laughingly, that there was nothing to worry about.

Teachers have also been known to falsify the records. Probably infrequent, this derivation of the early American political practice of winning elections with the tombstone vote is not unknown, especially in scattered and poorly supervised classes where a few additional enrollments can mean the continuation of a class. A variation: "If a student scores beyond the eighth grade on this test, we falsify the records."

The problem of attendance maintenance is unequally distributed. It is more acute in BEd classes than in ESL, where the participants are more homogeneous, the payoff is more clearly seen, the problem is more obviously resolved by specific remediation, and less stigma is attached to returning to school. Attendance maintenance is more difficult in beginning and lower-level classes when students give it a try and opt out. In some programs attendance may be toughest to maintain for those students in basic education classes who are typically unemployed, young, high school dropouts and who are more likely to attend daytime classes. Those hardest to reach, the so-called "hard core" chronically unemployed, rarely get into public school ABE classrooms except, perhaps, through the so-called Special Projects, funded independently under Title III as demonstrations. There have been some cases of their involvement through co-sponsorship with local antipoverty-type community organizations.

Like any professional gambler, the teacher keeps a cautious and cool eye on the take. And since attendance is bread, as class size nudges the established minimum he worries that the game will fold. But often minimum class size is more flexible than he realizes. Pressure on a particular teacher may be eased by a large initial enrollment in his class so that attrition is less threatening, by a high referral rate by community agencies to take up the slack of dropouts, or by a deliberate administrative policy to continue certain classes with lower than established minimum enrollment — such as those in high-priority neighborhoods or involving hard-to-reach students. In some of these cases the ABE director will lean over

backward to let large classes carry marginal ones. Pressure on teachers is also less in centralized programs than in single class sites. But everywhere attendance has a great deal to do with how the game is played.

Classroom Rules and Conventions

A distinguishing aspect of ABE is the conspicuous relaxation of customary rules, rituals, and conventions governing classroom conduct and management. Instruction begins when the teacher arrives and continues until his departure two or three hours later, except for a fifteen-minute break halfway through the period. However, students may and sometimes do arrive casually over the first half of the period, and occasionally later; tend to come and go according to their own personal requirements throughout the period; and leave when they are ready, anytime during the latter half of the class meeting.

Students may or may not request permission to leave the room, but are rarely constrained from doing as they wish. Some teachers minimize the disruptive influence of late arrivals by giving an initial assignment on the blackboard upon which students can work individually as they arrive. No grades are given, and students may or may not do the homework assigned.

Although most classes are businesslike with students seriously trying to learn, often there are some students who sleep, chat, read magazines, daydream, flirt, or wander about with minimum interference from the teacher. Such behavior is more frequently encountered in daytime classes, which have a larger proportion of younger students, particularly high school dropouts, mentally retarded adults, and others seeking to "pass the time" and socialize. The great majority of day students are unemployed; evening students usually have jobs.

Nor are there rules other than general social expectations governing deportment, dress, grooming, interpersonal manners, classroom posture, and so on. In effect, there is no apparent tampering with these kinds of individual behavior systems. Failure to meet expectations is not, by and large, brought to student or class attention except when it leads quite obviously to disturbance in the classroom. But even here the level of tolerance is wide.

> There came the musical sounds of a large radio filtering through the classroom from outside in the hall. Three young black adults hovered around the back entrance of the classroom, one of them carrying the blaring radio. The entire class turned around and the exercise ceased. They conversed for awhile and then one of the three fellows gave

each of the other two "five" (slapped their hands) and literally bopped into the classroom. He was about one hour late. The exercise continued and Mrs. H. said nothing. After a short spell the student who had just come in rose and went to the front of the classroom and signed his name on the class sign-in sheet. He then resumed his seat. Mrs. H. still said nothing.

This highly relaxed classroom atmosphere — and most are pleasant, friendly, and informal — is functional for the group to be served and dictated by the tyranny of maintaining attendance. ABE students have varied conceptions of time and punctuality, are easily slighted, have not generally learned to be learners, and are sometimes without the energy to attend to an instructional situation or even stay awake in a sitting position for extended periods after a hard day's work.

In most classes there will be a core group of serious and motivated learners. Observers note that ABE students fall into three easily delineated groups: learners, attenders, and occational attenders. By law, administrative policy, and often teacher conviction, all are welcome. Although instruction is recognized as paramount, it is a common and egregious error to equate the necessary functions of an ABE classroom with instruction alone. Some co-sponsored classes, like those given during the daytime in a local church, may be highly social with students composed of an established group of middle-aged ladies and with coffee and cake served "party style." Distinctions must be made between ESL and basic education classes, beginning and advanced classes, daytime and evening classes.

To further complicate the picture, the open enrollment policy of ABE has been interpreted to mean that students can begin work anytime during the term in which classes are scheduled, usually with little or no prior screening. "Availability is the name of the game" is a familiar cliche. In extreme cases teachers have experienced a complete change in student body during the same semester. Students resent the intrusion of late starters and absentees who make it necessary for the class to review and sometimes start again from the beginning for the benefit of newcomers.

The ideology of bringing the classroom to the learner has resulted in classes being held in a variety of settings. The most frequent arrangement is the evening use of an elementary school room. Chairs and desks are too small for adults, walls are full of children's drawings and posters, and chairs are sometimes bolted to the floor in rows, minimizing the possibility for group interaction and discussion.

Co-sponsored classes are frequently conducted in an employer's store or factory, a union hall, or a church or neighborhood organi-

zation's offices. Community organization facilities are often dirty, noisy, uncomfortable, and cramped. However, their informality and limited space are sometimes considered more conducive to student involvement in class interaction than is the case in school buildings. Co-sponsored classes — especially those involving anti-poverty agencies — are often most completely independent of the public school ABE office, which simply supplies a teacher. Speaking of one such arrangement, an ABE director said:

> I didn't even know that his classes were not meeting. Of course, we have a problem with that class. We moved four or five times. We have never been able to stay in a definite location for more than two or three months. It has been very hard to keep track of the students . . . . Of course, the co-sponsor is part of the community. It is a community action program. They often try to solve their problems without me.

In this case the community action agency set additional requirements for ABE teachers beyond those normally observed.* In such cases, a very different set of classroom rules may pertain. Community groups and leadership can impose sanctions of a totally different kind and order of magnitude from those at the command of a school-based ABE teacher.

Adult day schools are relatively uncommon. A few have been established recently as demonstration centers for reaching and educating adults from the hardest-to-reach, hard-core segment of the target population. These new demonstration projects are sharp departures from traditional adult day schools. The usual day school houses the ABE program along with an adult high school or vocational training program. Concentration of ABE classes in this setting affords obvious but as yet unrealized potentialities for screening, placement and referral, program integration, and the development of a student culture that can supplement and reinforce classroom socialization. Unfortunately, in practice, one may encounter a traditional formalism in the classroom and an oppressively impersonal institutional climate. Often classes are organized along usual subject matter lines — arithmetic, social studies, and so on. These courses are sometimes also organized by grade level, making it possible to group ABE students by achievement level, a luxury not afforded the teacher in a single class site.

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*That is, they must teach four nights a week and ESL teachers must speak Spanish. The ABE teacher agreed to informally subcontract on a sub rosa basis with another teacher, unqualified by public school standards but selected by the co-sponsoring organization, to teach on the nights she was unavailable.

Instructional Interaction

If you are over forty-five and visit some ABE classrooms, you are likely to be overwhelmed with nostalgic reminiscence of your salad days in Muncie, Indiana. The mode of instruction in many ABE classrooms is that of the elementary school of the 1920s before all those "progressive" educators began their tinkering. Drill, recitation, group blackboard work, doing assignments in class, using workbooks, and routinization are familiar hallmarks. There is substantial evidence from the field attesting to the remarkable durability and pervasiveness of the present-recite/test-correct approach.

The Process of Attending

Teachers generally attend to students on one of three levels: as a class, in groups, or as individuals. Their function is to either instruct, encourage, or control. Each of the three functions may be exercised by the teacher at any of the three levels. Although each function will be dealt with separately here, it should be understood that the art of teaching ABE classes as they are presently conducted is in no small part related to the skill and sensitivity of the teacher in performing his functions well and in intimate combination. This involves having a variety of techniques for each, discriminatingly selecting those most appropriate to various specific classroom situations and sensitively timing the distribution of this effort among class, group, and individual levels. Some teachers are highly skilled at this multifunctional, multilevel process of attending. General movement from one level of attending to others is frequent and rapid, a factor making for sustained student attention. Sometimes a teacher will be quite aware of doing this and will test his inclination to make such a shift in focus by asking for an expression of preference by the students on, for instance, whether to revert back to attending at the class level rather than continuing with individual instruction. Usually he abides by the majority.

Individualized lesson plans are common in BEd classes, much less so in ESL. Plans are usually similar in sequence and content for students working at the same level, but units are assigned each student according to his present level of performance. He progresses through the series of exercises at his own rate of speed. When the teacher instructs at the class level it is predicated on the assumption that most students will progress through the material at about the same pace. He is most likely to gear his instruction to the class as a whole by focusing on a broad and ambiguously defined middle range of ability, performance, and reaction time, and hopes to cope with those either above or below this range with special individual assignments.

At the Class Level

The most common pattern of instruction is for the teacher to present the class with either an assignment, such as a problem or dictation; an explanation, illustration or (rarely) a demonstration; or a series of questions. The class may then copy or repeat in unison, that is, drill, by reading aloud, pronouncing and spelling a word, reciting multiplication tables, and so on, or participate in a dialogue with the teacher, who directs questions to the class to be answered by those who volunteer to do so. Drill at the class level, as found most commonly in ESL, implies a relatively similar range of comprehension, verbal facility, reaction time, and confidence to make public disclosure of what one knows. Although broad variation in these factors appears to exist, in practice only those within a limited range participate actively in the exercise. If students who remain silent are not threatened with exposure and are not overwhelmed with the pace of the drill, it may provide them with an opportunity to test a series of silent provisional tries. There is little direct evidence to support this optimistic possibility, however.

An alternative to class drills is for the teacher to solicit or require an individual public response; the student is asked either to "recite" or perform at the blackboard. Active solicitation at the class level almost invariably elicits a patterned student response with the same predictable handful of the most verbal volunteering, the balance of the class remaining silent. Soliciting a response from a class is usually not an effective instructional tactic in ABE. If, on the other hand, a teacher requires a response, he usually does so by calling on one of the more advanced students first, either unconsciously or to encourage the others to participate.

Teacher-required responses are typically in the form of reviewing materials covered in the last class meeting ("What is a syllable?") with blackboard explanation; a quiz (on the use of pronouns, for example); reading paragraphs from a history book (students following in unison as the teacher reads the text sentence by sentence followed by individual student reading and then the teacher repeating difficult words several times with the class repeating after him); sentence completion; copying letters on the blackboard; and (in ESL) the teacher posing a brief question followed by a one sentence reply in unison. The teacher-required response most characteristic of ESL is recitation conducted serially according to seating pattern.

In the face of an inadequate response, the teacher behaves in a variety of ways. He may — with a light touch or brusquely, indicating impatience — prompt, answer his own question, go to another for an answer to the same or a different question, reprimand those

who failed to respond, encourage, "moralize," or use "banter control," a form of chiding or humorous threat.

Less frequently, the teacher checks his own performance when students fail to respond and, for example, deliberately reduces the speed of his speech to assure maximum understanding of his question or, realizing a particular student's fear of public embarrassment, suggests that he may prefer to meet with him in private rather than "share with the class."

Teachers differentiate between more and less successful students by grouping according to achievement, speaking more slowly for the less advanced, giving extra time to slower students or to those disattending, providing more individualized instruction to those at a lower level, excusing the slower or lower-level students from recitation, and, as previously mentioned, calling upon better students first to recite or respond to a class-level question.

Team teaching usually involves a co-teacher working with a segment of the class, such as students having trouble with grammar, vocabulary or pronunciation. When team teaching means co-teaching, it often leads to this or some other form of grouping by performance or ability. When it means that the class as a whole shifts to another teacher after a period of an hour or so, the division of labor is in the subject matter, with one person reaching reading, another arithmetic, and so on. This latter variation appears more suitable to intermediate or advanced levels of instruction in sites, such as adult day schools, where several ABE classes are conducted at the same time. Both arrangements are favorably viewed by students, except in cases commonly reported when they form intensive attachments to a particular teacher and even resist being promoted out of his classroom.

At the Group Level

Elementary school tradition is further reflected in the heavy emphasis teachers place on asking questions. Most classroom interaction involves teacher questioning and student answering.

A less frequent alternative to following up a class assignment or a teacher presentation with class drill, dialogue, or individual public reponse is to break the class into groups to maximize participation. This is most commonly done for recitation and practice; that is, students are paired to read sentences in dialogue form or go through the "What is that? This is a hat" routine in ESL. Group problem solving, discussion, and other adult education methods designed to aid them to learn from each other's experiences are rarely encountered.

At the Individual Level

The final option is for the teacher to shift to attending individuals while the class is working on a problem or individual exercises. These individual checks on student progress may be followed by a class-level review. There are five ways in which attending at the individual level is done.

1. The teacher may attend individuals by "turn taking," walking up and down the aisles to check their work. He may choose to do this by priority, that is, by attending those asking for attention, or by routine, that is, "making the rounds" — stopping at each desk in turn, the order dictated by the seating pattern, and giving everyone "four or five minutes with the teacher."

A few teachers acquire a high level of skill at "multiple individual attending," the ability to give individual attention in rapid succession to several students; for example:

> he will suggest a correction, and, while the student is making the correction, test somebody else, come back and finish up the correction with the first student while he nods encouragement to a third.

As he follows his turn taking, the teacher may feel a problem encountered frequently should be shared; he then reverts back to the class level by asking, "Is anyone else having this problem?" or "How would the rest of you solve this problem?" If the class response indicates others share the problem, this technique can encourage the individual to feel that he is not alone in his difficulty and provide a reassuring "benchmark" against which to measure his progress. If he discovers, however, that he is alone with his problem, his confidence may be seriously undermined.

2. A second modal way for the teacher to attend individuals is by "search out," seeking those who have trouble and want help. This may involve actively soliciting requests for assistance, asking, "How are you doing?" "Do you understand?" Students who request individual attention always seem prepared to wait for it while the teacher is helping others. There is little vying for attention.

3. A third, less common, tactic is for the teacher to act as "resource" person by annoucing that he is ready to receive those who wish consultation or assistance at his desk. This is the "instant readiness" approach. It is characteristic of a relaxed teaching style that places a premium on self-directed student effort. It is not common in ABE classrooms, with their inordinately heavy dependence upon the present-recite/test-correct format, turn-taking and search-out variations for providing individual attention.

4. Another infrequent approach to attending to individuals is by having students help each other. The more advanced are some-

times asked to help tutor others. This often generated resentment by those singled out for help. In certain unusual situations, such as in classes with several Chinese students, there is often such tightly cohesive group structure within the classroom that teachers are forced to treat the students as a learning group. In such situations there is more mutual help, with evidence of strong group sanctions in operation. Serious academic effort results.

5. A final alternative tactic for individualizing the attending function is to do so through an aide. The usual pattern is for the aide to work with individuals or groups. He continuously "makes the rounds," following the "search out" approach, asking, "Do you need help?" "How are you doing?" or he may shift to turn taking, tutoring, and encouraging specific participants on a priority basis dictated by the teacher.

Innovative Approaches

True departures from present-recite/test-correct do occur in ABE. One different and interesting departure capitalizes on student interest by letting classroom interaction dictate the order and pace of covering desired content rather than having this dictated by some predetermined logic or by merely following the order of commercially prepared materials. In this "loose structure" approach, the teacher, who must have a high tolerance for ambiguity, sets a broadly defined and flexible structure of topics to be covered. Major concepts composing each topic are covered in an order largely determined by student involvement in defining problems, illustrating concepts, and testing meanings in their personal experience. Class interaction also determines the speed with which there is movement from topic to topic and in what order this is done. More difficult topics take longer. A good teacher will again find appropriate uses of instruction on class, group, and individual levels.

The "loose structure" approach illustrates one encouraging possibility of teaching ABE to maximize the congruence between the form of material to be covered and the readiness of the learner, "beginning with people where they are" and moving them toward their goal. Students are intimately involved in organizing the learning situation, a real innovation in ABE experience. Its success, of course, is a function of the teacher providing the essential, broad, flexible structure to assure progression and evoking relevant and continuing student contributions within it.

Another sharp departure from the present-recite format is the small group approach, in which the teacher, serving in "instant readiness" as a resource person, attends almost exclusively at small

group and individual levels. Assignments are given at different times both to individuals and to small groups of three or four. Not all group assignments are the same; one may read aloud into a tape recorder while another reads to each other and a third reads silently first and aloud later. Students usually may select which group they enter, knowing that some work with "easier" and some with "more difficult" material. Friends are encouraged to stay together, and there is a great deal of socializing within groups. The teacher may strongly encourage a student to join a particular group he feels would best suit the student. Individuals are expected and encouraged to complete their own assignments. These may be corrected by the student through the use of an answer book located in the front of the room, and are often periodically checked by the teacher. When he is not occupied with responding to requests for help from a group or individuals working within a group, the teacher will rotate, assuming, in turn, membership in each group, and take his turn in the work. Students have great freedom within their group to "do their own thing" as long as they do not create a serious disturbance; they have found this approach to their liking. Older students sometimes have to get over a set of traditional expectations of teacher behavior before they are completely comfortable in this classroom format.

It is useful to distinguish innovative approaches to instruction in standard classroom environments from these involving instructional systems or technologies. The most prevalent example of the latter is the so-called learning laboratory, some variant of which was reported in operation in about two out of three cities. In its pure form, the learning laboratory (or center) employs teaching machines like the Tach-X, Aud-X, and Controlled Reader and programmed materials to permit students to work on individualized work plans at their own pace. The equipment and procedures are sometimes utilized simultaneously by the whole class. Typically, students are interviewed and tested and an individual study plan is prescribed by a teacher, counselor, lab coordinator, or some combination of these. The student is encouraged to ask for help as he needs it, and it is given on a tutorial basis by a teacher or lab coordinator who happens to be in attendance. The student may come to the lab any time of day or evening and work as long as he wishes. There is periodic retesting and reformulation of the work plan. Generally, work in the learning laboratory is used to supplement regular classroom activity, but many programs encourage the use of the learning lab as an alternative to the regular classroom, particularly for more advanced students. In brief, then, the learning

lab allows for totally individualized instruction geared to the pace set by the learner and mediated by machines and programmed materials. Feedback on performance is built into the system so that benchmarks of progress are clear and reliable.

The individualized arrangements in the combined learning center appear most helpful for those students who attend infrequently or irregularly or are loners, and for those who want to accelerate or supplement their instructional program. The equipment and procedures, which have sufficient novelty for some students to both attract them to the center and sustain their interest, are used teach segments of the curriculum, for skill practice, for remediation, for review, and may involve either individual students working alone or whole classes simultaneously covering similar content. Instruction is usually confined to teaching the essentials of reading, writing, and arithmetic. The standard classes can be somewhat differentiated regarding content and level and provide the structure, social-emotional support, and guidance some students want. For many students, the combination of the two is most satisfactory.

Additional innovative systems still in their formative stages are educational TV, mobile learning units, and "armchair" classes. These new approaches to ABE instruction have largely been limited to demonstration and experimentation projects, although the armchair system has been picked up by a number of public school programs. Educational TV, which obviously has great potential for reaching large numbers of undereducated adults, is still largely in the developmental stage. An ambitious early effort in this area was undertaken by the Southwestern Cooperative Educational Laboratory, which developed and field-tested thirty TV instructional units designed for functionally illiterate Mexican-Americans. Mobile learning units — essentially learning laboratories on wheels — are designed to bring ABE to where the students are. The idea seems to have particular promise for reaching adults in isolated rural areas. A mobile learning center in Mississippi, which moved among seven different locations each week, was reported to be highly successful in terms of numbers reached, retention, and learning gains on standardized tests.[1] About three-fifths of the urban ABE directors believe that educational technology (programmed instruction, instructional hardware, TV programming, and so on) holds great promise for improving instruction in their programs.

The adult armchair system is an urban-oriented approach to bringing ABE to the student — particularly the poorest and most alienated, who are not attracted by conventional recruitment techniques. Developed and tested by the Opportunities Industrialization Center

in Philadelphia, the armchair method uses paid indigenous recruiters to bring undereducated adults together to learn in the homes of local residents — hence the term, armchair. Students attend ten three-hour classes that meet once a week. Instruction is informal and focuses on the particular needs of each learning group of approximately ten adults. A major purpose of the armchair community classes is to build motivation and enhance self-confidence so that students will choose to continue their education in a public school ABE program or enter job training programs. Heavy reliance is placed on intensive individual counseling, which generally results in referrals for additional education, job training, job placement, or social services. In essence, then, the armchair classes serve as feeders for existing ABE or high school equivalency classes and job training programs.

Individual in-home tutoring, often using paraprofessionals as instructors, has been found invaluable as an approach for working with the hardest-to-reach in Appalachia, Vermont, and other parts of the country. Proponents contend that the additional costs of such programs are small because the teachers can serve many individuals on a flexible time schedule and because attrition is much less of a problem.

Content

When achievement testing is done periodically by a counselor, or the teacher administers a standardized test such as the ABLE at fixed points in a student's development (often after two hundred hours, or when the student's goal is the General Educational Development test (GED) and high school equivalency diploma) these instruments tend to substantially dictate what is taught.

There is a major effort to prepare students for the GED examination despite the current program termination at the eighth-grade level. "Pre GED" courses are common, GED materials are widely used, and most ABE officials conspire to avoid what they consider to be an artificial and unreasonable eighth grade limitation.

There is little evidence that teachers test for student achievement of such goals of ABE as health, consumer, family life, and civic education. Although the official line encourages instruction in these fields as inherent parts of ABE, in practice this is done only incidentally as the text happens to deal with them. They are rarely taught independently as supplements or as extensions of reading, writing, and arithmetic. Some teachers try to encourage students to relate concepts from these areas in the text to their real lives, but this is an occasional rather than routine practice. Tests are

largely concerned with bread-and-butter objectives of reading, writing, and arithmetic. Those objectives most amenable to exact measurement tend to displace all others.

So-called "coping skills," like how to apply for a job, take a test, deal with a public agency, use community resources, and so on, are seldom taught except in surprisingly rare instances, and these mostly in ESL, when participants are helped with their checking accounts or income tax forms or instructed in the uses of money orders or a library card. Adult educators talk a great deal about the role of coping skills in ABE, but this interest has seldom been translated into classroom practice.*

Generally, ESL classes are the ones that place greater emphasis on teaching for socialization. Students are predominatly from other countries, and there is a tradition of Americaization that provides precedents. Consequently, ESL teachers commonly deal with American customs, problems, and values through discussion of such topics as women's role, communism, race relations, birth control, pasteurization, and U.S. foreign policy. There is typically no patterned sequence for teaching this content. Teachers tend to resort to such considerations to break the dull routine of drill and memorization, selecting topics of special interest to students.

ESL teachers more commonly supplement the frequently nonexistent commercially prepared material with references to television shows, museum exhibits, magazine articles, pictures, cookbooks, restaurant menus, reports of participant trips, travel slides, and maps. Teachers tend to follow the elementary school emphasis on teaching reading rather than spoken English. The rules of grammar still dominate ESL instruction.

BEd teachers who supplement commercially produced materials often bring in references to black culture and newspaper stories on such current issues as narcotics, crime, foreign policy, or other headline news. Again, there is usually little planning or integration with other course content.

Teachers are universally encouraged to prepare their own materials in an effort to relate content to specific interests of their students, but they do so infrequently. Seldom is time allocated for such work within the ABE program. Most teachers do use other available materials to supplement those they may order from a list

*Responses received from directors on our survey questionnaire contradict this assertion. However, findings from direct observation, tested in our regional workshops, support it.

approved by the city department of education. Frequent and lengthy delays in receiving materials are endemic, the problem being especially acute in scattered, single-class sites. Often material used in the classroom is borrowed from elsewhere in the public school system and is not written for adults. In several programs students have to buy their texts or materials. Programmed material is not popular, in part because it is misunderstood by teachers, and is seldom used in the classroom.

Important though content of lessons planned by the teacher may be, of at least equal relevance are "latent lessons" students learn in ABE classes. These incidental and unplanned learnings are a special contribution to student acculturation. Included are latent lessons dealing with the American promise of education as the high road to mobility and success, the idea of phased progression toward a goal, how to dope out benchmarks in an educational setting, industriousness, self-directedness in learning, tactics for getting people to do something, how to teach, and others. In classes fostering small learning groups, students may learn how to participate in group problem solving and discussion. Some may come to see the teacher as a success model. Successful students will learn to be learners and will acquire self-confidence in their own capabilities. It is curious that the relevance of learning and what is to be learned are seldom discussed in ABE classes but are left implicit and assumed.

Personalizing Instruction

Regardless of the instructional tactics used, a teacher is generally more likely to elicit active involvement when he personalizes instruction. He may demonstrate how pronunciation of students' words reflects their place of origin, draw examples from their own experience, solicit information about customs in a student's homeland, encourage individual reactions to a story or idea in the materials, and otherwise personalize abstract concepts. Highly task-oriented teachers who resist diversion or personalization and concentrate on getting through the course work seem less likely to succeed. Teachers are generally aware of the importance of showing their concern for students as individuals.

Trying for student involvement is not always good enough. In one highly unusual effort, a teacher attempted to conduct a role-playing situation in which his class was to set up a mock government to overthrow him in his role as "dictator." Unfortunately, this commendably innovative conception resulted in confusion and considerable resistance because it was poorly planned and execu-

ted. Many students did not understand what was expected of them or what was going on.

Occasionally teachers conduct class field trips — to a zoo, planetarium, or library. These efforts are hindered because students often cannot afford the cost of transportation or admission fees. Sometimes a "resource person" from the community will be brought into the class to give a talk and answer questions about credit unions, drug abuse, election issues, or other topics of interest. This is seldom in response to any inventory of student interest, and students are not only infrequently involved in planning or making arrangements for the event but are rarely encouraged to prepare questions in advance or assess the success of the visit. Some cities have organized student councils, and in one city the council prepares a newspaper. It should be noted that involving students in any kind of evaluation of methods, materials, teacher performance, scheduling, classroom facilities or anything else for that matter, is almost unheard of in ABE. Students vote with their feet.

Teachers make common use of available audiovisual aids such as films, film strips, slides, charts and tape recorders. However, aids are not always available to teachers when they are needed, the supply problem being acute. Reading machines are scarce and often initially confusing, but younger students especially tend to like them after becoming acquainted with their operation. Students are encouraged to bring materials to class, and a few do so.

There is probably need for a variety of teaching methods and techniques to fit the differing experiences and learning styles of ABE students as well as different educational objectives. We are only beginning to realize the instructional implications of teaching men coming out of a Latin *machismo* culture, or women teaching black ghetto-raised youth, or middle-class whites teaching lower-class nonwhites, or anyone teaching groups of adult students coming from the Chinese culture. The prevailing effort to teach to a "middle range" has resulted in heaviest dropout rates among students at the highest or lowest level of achievement, including those who need help most desperately.

The Ideology of Minimum Failure

Eliot Liebow in *Tally's Corner*[2] tells the story of Richard, a black street-corner man, who has worked for others off and on for many months doing minor plastering, repairs, and painting. A real estate agent gives him an unusual chance to bid on the job himself, but

he fails to do so. To explain why, Liebow recalls an earlier conversation:

> I graduated from high school (Baltimore) but I don't know anything. I'm dumb. Most of the time I don't even say I graduated, 'cause then somebody asks me a question and I can't answer it, and they think I was lying about graduating . . . . They graduated me but I didn't know anything. I had lousy grades but I guess they wanted to get rid of me.
>
> I was at Margaret's house the other night and her little sister asked me to help her with her homework. She showed me some fractions, and I knew right away I couldn't do them. I was ashamed so I told her I had to go to the bathroom.

Liebow comments, "And so it must have been, surely, with the real estate agent's offer. Convinced that 'I'm dumb . . . I don't know anything,' he 'knew right away' he couldn't do it, despite the fact that he had been doing just this sort of work all along."

This is the failure syndrome endemic to ghetto, barrio, and reservation — a continually reinforced conviction of failure and incompetence, bred by a grim history of frustrating school experiences and subsequent inability to support oneself and one's family, which becomes a self-fulfilling prophesy. Dealt nothing but losses by society's stacked deck of chances for success, a man becomes terrified by the threat of being tested again and still found wanting. Nothing fails like failure.

With rare exceptions, street-corner men in black ghettos are not found in public school ABE classes, but many students who do choose to attend come with the same bag — in kind if not degree. Most ABE teachers are sensitive to this. They have to be or their students will not come back.

There is a conviction by some adult educators working with the hardest to reach that their success will be a function of the degree to which they can abandon the confines of a traditional teacher role in favor of one of a friend. In ghetto culture this means a willingness and ability to assume broadly defined and demanding obligations of friendship and helping; in that these are understood as reciprocal, the student will more readily participate with the teacher in learning situations. Except in rare cases, ABE teachers do not, and often cannot, make such broad commitment to the students — to offer continuing personal involvement and immediate and unsparing succor in every sort of crisis. There is good reason to believe that this is what it takes to work educationally with "hard core" youth and adults. However, the structure of ABE classes — the fractional commitment to the program possible for part-time teachers, and their primary obligation to the many more educa-

tionally deprived students able to operate in the program as it now functions precludes this.

If ABE teachers rarely become personally involved with their students out of class in such things as helping them deal with public agencies, finding jobs, or handling family problems, better teachers do make a concerted effort to show their friendly concern for their students as individuals and often establish relationships of closeness and trust. But the unusual situation was found to be one in which

> the students who were verbal . . . seemed to look to the teacher as a kind of "counselor" — someone who could supply information and advice on almost any subject whether it related to the usual classroom content, their social lives, etc.

Although teachers occasionally eat lunch or have coffee during breaks with students, socializing out of class is rare. They keep up with students' personal lives through checking on reasons for lack of attendance and make home contacts, most often by phone, note, or through other students, to encourage them to return to class.

The relaxed classroom climate, in which students may arrive or leave as their personal requirements dictate and sleep when they have the will but not the energy to learn, contributes in important ways toward giving them encouragement to continue.

Although the structure of the instructional process is traditional, the process itself has been modified to define failure as such out of existence in the classroom and minimize its increments in teacher-student interaction. The only failure becomes the failure to continue to come to class. And of course, the pressure to maintain attendance substantially fosters the ideology of minimum failure.

There is no tyranny of expectation in ABE classrooms. "Going at your own rate" is honored in theory and, within the constraints of the classroom, in practice. It is obviously important to examine the dynamics of the teacher's function of encouraging but in this, as in the control function, feeling tone, nonverbal communication, and the context of a relationship become more important than what is said.

The tactics of failure reduction in ABE have been highly refined. A most familiar device is to help the student "work through" mistakes by redefining the task into simple components. Success in mastering steps individually thereby transforms initial failure into accomplishment. Another tactic that goes along with this approach is to set a goal with the student that he not make the same mistake twice.

Intensive effort is made to emphasize progress and achievements while minimizing the student's difficulties. Teachers prompt, permit

delays in response, reformulate assignments that initially appear too difficult, and remind students of their accomplishments or that the successful completion of a task is imminent with just a little more effort. If the student appears to be slowing down his pace, the teacher may suggest that he work less intensively or skip over troublesome problems and return to them later. The teacher will compliment the student on partially correct answers or may, in some cases, permit a student to advance along with the class, even though his performance was not satisfactory, while being given special individual assignments.

With chiding or an expression of friendly concern the teacher can relieve the initial anxieties of the new student who is often filled with doubts concerning his ability to learn. To encourage students to like him and continue to come to class, to foster a light and easy classroom climate, to hold students' attention, and to break up the monotony of a task or to relieve tension, the teacher may indulge in witty remarks, teasing, flirting, entertaining stories or other dramatic and emotive techniques. Moreover, the form of instruction itself reflects the strategy of minimizing failure. On the individual level, "turn taking by priority" directs the teacher's priority efforts at those who need the most help. On the class level, when each student must respond in turn, those who falter or make mistakes tend to be well distributed throughout the class and are eased through the problem in a light and non-threatening manner.

When the teacher either solicits a class response or calls upon someone to recite, a pattern develops with the more articulate volunteering and better students being singled out first by the teacher to perform. This protects the student who is less sure of himself from having to "be first." Teachers who follow the "search out" pattern of giving individual instruction often become highly sensitive to nonverbal cues for identifying those in need of assistance and invariably give special attention to new students and more time on an individual level to those making slowest progress. The use of an aide in the classroom enhances opportunities for this individual attention, and teachers may use aides to correct student mistakes when they themselves find it uncomfortable or awkward to do so.

Students, under pressure to perform in the classroom, are relieved by teacher banter, a shift in the level of attending from individual or small group to class level, class breaks, and by an ESL teacher's occasionally reverting to the native language of the students.

Some teachers are sensitive to the problem of adult students taking offense at being taught like children. They sometimes make a special effort to avoid this impression.

> Now he starts to sell the "rods" introduced two weeks ago, admitting that many students are absent because of the rods — feeling they are for children. (The rods are square pieces of wood of varying lengths that can be used to teach various mathematical skills.) Mr. C. is showing them how the rods can be used for learning fractions. He argues that the rods make it easier because they are tangible. He asks that students give more time to see how useful they are before deciding to reject them. They are encouraged to take them home to study.

Others resort to a tactic of "infantilizing" students by adopting a parent's patronizing attitude toward a child.

> Mrs. B. says, "Michael, what does every sentence have to have?" Michael smiles and puts his hands up to his head and says, "Oh, . . . I know . . ." Mrs. B. says, "I know you do; don't disappoint me, Michael."

One clearly delineated feature of ABE classrooms is a marked lack of student competition. There are probably several reasons for this. ABE students do not participate in cohort groups. They go at their own pace with individual assignments and benchmarks of progress — awareness of where they are in the program, how long it will take, and often how they are doing — are imprecise. This is an important advantage in minimizing failure. Teachers sometimes appear to be deliberately fostering the blurring of benchmarks for this reason.

A point of highest threat potential is testing. ABE students, especially men, come to class with such diminished self-images that any small reversal can evoke echoes of a dozen other humiliations. Serious students who feel they are doing well, often women, and those moving progressively at intermediate or advanced levels toward the GED, welcome tests as reinforcing benchmarks of progress inasmuch as they are unrelated to grading and results are not publicly revealed. For many, tests are threatening and tension producing but are accepted as part of the routine. The problem is most acute for those coming to class for the first time. The number who leave the program or never really get started in it because of being tested is unknown but believed by many ABE educators to be very high. Nevertheless, other means of evaluating achievement have not been widely substituted.

Often the initial diagnostic or class-level placement test is delayed for days or weeks in deference to the aversion of new students to being tested. Teachers make an effort to assure them that

test results are not judgmental but are desirable for diagnostic and practice purposes; "to help identify what you don't know so we can find out what to teach." Students are given "pre-tests" to coach them for important tests it is felt they must take. Classroom testing includes quizzes covering recent assignments. More comprehensive reviews correlating performance with grade level and sometimes other tests are administered by the teacher.

The characteristically relaxed rules of classroom conduct sometimes help vitiate the threat as well as the value of testing.

> Most of the students seemed quite concerned about a test which they were going to have, and there was much conversation among them, last minute looking at their workbooks, etc. Many of them, especially the Spanish-speaking students, were arranging their seats in groups so that they would be able to cheat. One Spanish girl asked a male friend, a Chinese student, if he would sit near her so that she could see his answers; he obligingly sat in front of her, and, throughout the test, he held his paper to the side so that she could see the answers over his shoulder. In the back of the room, a group of students (mostly Spanish) sat clustered together in a very conspicuous attempt to share information . . . . Mrs. C. made no comment which would indicate that she either knew or objected to what was going on — although on several occasions during the actual test, when a student was obviously talking to another person — she would frequently ask "innocently," "Do you have a question?"

Blurring benchmarks of students' progress is a common practice by ABE teachers. One encounters students in beginning-level classes who think they are doing high school work. This may account for the frequent overdependence on the teacher. Why take a chance on a new teacher when you really don't know how you're doing, and you already have acceptance and constant reinforcement?

Control Maintenance

Teacher control of ABE students presents unique problems. The students are adults. They may not be treated as children with impunity. They are diverse to a degree beyond the wildest experience of an elementary or secondary school teacher. As most come with limited experience as learners in a formal setting, a limited attention span for study, a high degree of self-doubt bred of past failure, and a tendency to take easy offense, the problem is obvious. When this is compounded with voluntary enrollment and a first priority for the teacher to maintain attendance, the potentialities for difficulty assume formidable proportions.

The control function is primarily one of maintaining student attention and order. It is principally exercised by a combination of dis-

attending and banter with several alternative and supplementary tactics. The relaxation of rules, conventions, and rituals of classroom behavior also has implications for control. Experienced teachers often fail to acknowledge those who arrive late or noisily or leave early, move about, chat, sleep, and otherwise behave in ways that depart from traditional classroom conduct. Teachers disattend students who require a disproportionate amount of time to achieve progress, such as those who might be considered mentally retarded or emotionally disturbed. These people seldom create a real threat to order, and the cost of attention maintenance is too high in terms of the teacher's time. Teachers also disattend occasional mild efforts to bait them or play "games."

Tight control tantamount to that found in high school is simply not feasible or necessary in ABE. Teachers who try for it almost invariably come a-cropper. The more they concern themselves with trying to control the inattentive or mildly disruptive, the less attention they can give to serious learners. This can generate serious problems, causing discouragement and frustration among students who are trying to learn.

A control-oriented teacher will characteristically attempt to entrap students who are inattentive by singling them out to recite, or may be driven to "take on" the whole class in a fruitless showdown.

> Mr. S. then "challenged" the students to tell him what the assignment had been; he went around the class calling on individual students to tell him, but when they hesitated, he indicated his impatience by immediately calling on another student. He commented, "Do you mean that I have to spend an hour explaining what I explained yesterday?"

But such deterioration of relationship and unpleasantness is rare. Most teachers stay loose with their classes by modifying their expectations, working with those whom they feel will benefit, and using control tactics discriminatingly.

Banter control is used in a variety of ways. It is often employed to keep the class working while the teacher instructs an individual ("Everybody half through? Man, they're grooving tonight!"), to solicit a class response ("Everybody must be pretty good at spelling; I don't hear a question."), to tell an individual to get back to work ("Reading something interesting? We need your help with this exercise"), to cushion a command ("This place sounds like a protest demonstration. Let's have it quiet."), and to indicate an action as inappropriate (a student leaves the room: "Who got away? How dare she . . .?").

Teachers try to avoid a direct command to an individual by generalizing to the class as a whole. They seldom press the point to

force a confrontation that may likely prove embarrassing to both student and teacher.

> Nearby a group of about four students were looking at a book and laughing rather loudly. Mrs. B. looked up from her work and stated in the direction of the group, "It's getting pretty noisy in here." None of the students seemed aware of her comment and continued to talk together, although no longer laughing. Mrs. B., after receiving no response from them, went back to working with a student and made no further comment. The group of students returned to their seats a short time later.

Similarly, student hostility toward the teacher is dealt with gingerly. The teacher typically backs away from a potential confrontation. Threats are uncommon. Teachers may threaten a test or to separate students who wish to sit together but have so little leverage that other threats are apt to be transparently empty. Embarrassment is another control tactic of dubious value. Mild shock is occasionally used — a teacher may use taboo words or make derogatory statements about motherhood or the flag to achieve this effect. The strategy of lavishing encouragement on every student effort — high encouragement when they make a correct response, the "working through" type of encouraging support when they are not correct — is still another method of control.

A "bait" tactic is sometimes resorted to in an attempt to control attendance. This can involve having an aide give dancing lessons, promising to show slides of students' native countries, or having a class party on a future class meeting. The promised bait is seldom an attractive enough incentive to the student to motivate him to respond if he is otherwise disinclined to do so.

Control problems are more difficult in day school and beginning-level classes, and they are probably greater in BEd than in ESL. In co-sponsored classes where the class is composed of a preexisting cohesive group, responsibility for control is often shared by group members who tend to police classroom behavior themselves, leaving teacher control largely a matter of attention maintenance. Students who stay with the ABE program generally share middle-class attitudes, take their work seriously and present few behavioral problems.

In Part II we will attempt to understand more fully the reasons for the modes and variations in urban classroom interaction delineated in this chapter.

Notes

1. Appalachian Adult Basic Education Demonstration Center, *Final Report* (Morehead, Ky.: Morehead State University, 1970), p. 56.
2. Eliot Liebow, *Tally's Corner* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1967), p. 55.

Chapter 3

The Students

Put yourself in the shoes of the long-shot gambler who places his bets on ABE. You are a forty-five-year-old black man, eking out a living at an unstable succession of menial and arduous jobs, poor, haunted by failure, numbed with self-doubt, without study skills, and unable to read. Furthermore, going back to school seems an endless uphill struggle. Just learning the three R's means years of weary plugging, night after night, month after month. And then what? What will an eighth-grade education get you? Into the ninth grade is about all. So you resign yourself to still more long months and maybe win a high school diploma. What is the big payoff when you have finally made it?* Talk about long shots and unbounded faith in the American dream. For many, the odds in ABE are not long; they are heroic.

A functional illiterate finds himself desperately hobbled in trying to cope with everyday life. He may have difficulty reading the newspaper or signs telling a bus's destination or the time of day — if he reads at all; he has trouble understanding an application for employ-

*The payoff is certainly less for blacks than for whites. Blacks with a high school diploma earn 30 percent less than whites with comparable educational attainment. (Bureau of the Census and Bureau of Labor Statistics, *The Social and Economic Status of Negroes in the United States*, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1971), p. 34.

ment or any of the myriad other forms and documents — income tax, bank loan, installment contract, Medicare, welfare — that confront him; he cannot help his children with their schoolwork; he cannot pass a simple test to qualify for a promotion or a better job; he is often a gullible consumer, an easy mark for deceptive business practices, and a citizen ill equipped to participate in the public life of his community and nation. The cumulative effect of these disabilities seals the fate of the illiterate. Even if he can read at fifth- or sixth-grade level, he is found disproportionately at the dirty end of every index of social well-being.

One index is income. A national survey of ABE students revealed that about half had family incomes of less than $4,000 per year. About 14 percent were unemployed and seeking employment.[1] In urban areas the great majority of those who are employed hold unskilled, semiskilled, or service jobs. In New York City, for example, more than two-thirds of employed ABE participants are unskilled, semiskilled, domestic, or service workers. Only one in seven is classified as skilled.

Despite low income, periodic unemployment, and marginal jobs, most Title III participants are not on the welfare rolls. The proportion on welfare would undoubtedly be higher were it not for special educational programs for welfare recipients such as WIN (Work Incentive) that enroll many thousands, particularly in urban areas. Nationally, about one in four ABE participants is on welfare,[2] but in most cities the proportion may be somewhat lower because of competition from WIN and various job training programs.

ABE students include teen-age dropouts as well as elderly men and women well past retirement age, but there are fewer older adults than might be expected. In New York and San Jose roughly eight out of ten Title III registrants in recent years were between sixteen and thirty-nine years of age. Less than 2 percent were sixty or older. In other cities, like Boston and Detroit, the proportion of younger enrollees (under forty) is lower — approximately 65 percent. Differences in student age distribution among cities might exist because non-English speaking students, the majority in some cities, tend to be younger than those born in this country. A 1967 survey of Detroit students found 45 percent of the foreign born to be thirty years or younger compared with only 21 percent of native-born blacks.[3] The fact that San Jose's program is almost entirely non-English speaking (mostly Mexican-Americans), and that New York's is 70 percent non-English speaking, suggests that the lower mean age of students in these cities is related to their ethnic backgrounds. National program statistics show student mean age con-

siderably lower in states with large urban populations.[4]

Not only are big-city students younger, but they are more likely to be women. Nationally, women account for 57 percent of total enrollment.[5] But in Boston, New York City, and Detroit approximately 70 percent of those enrolled in recent years were women. It is significant, too, that black women outnumber black men two to one in ABE, while the proportion of white women to white men is about equal.[6] Thus, it seems that the higher proportion of women in cities such as Detroit, Washington, Boston, and New York is related to the fact that many participants in these cities are black. San Jose, which has very few black participants, has an almost equal ratio of men to women.

Racial and ethnic backgrounds of those enrolled vary enormously, but in general reflect the ethnic and racial composition of the inner-city poor. In certain cities, however, particularly those like New York with both large foreign-born and native black communities, the non-English speaking are represented in disproportionately greater numbers. On the other hand, in Washington, D.C., where the poor and undereducated population is overwhelmingly black, it is this group that is being served almost exclusively by ABE. In San Francisco, a city with a very heterogeneous ethnic composition, there are many Orientals in the program, as well as a mix of blacks, Mexican-Americans, and some whites. As might be expected, the number of native-born white Americans in the six cities studied was small.

One might well predict wide variation in age and ethnicity among ABE students. What may be surprising, however, is the variation in years of schooling completed. Particularly arresting is the fact that a majority of students in urban areas have completed eight, ten, or even twelve years of formal schooling but remain functionally illiterate. A recent national survey found that half of the adults in ABE under forty-five years of age have had nine or more years of schooling.[7]

To sum up, urban ABE students are likely to be young to middle-aged, poor, and employed as unskilled or semi-skilled laborers or service workers. If they speak English as their native language, they are, with few exceptions, black — and more likely to be women and somewhat older. Many of those who do not speak English are Puerto Rican, Mexican-American, or immigrants from Central and South America, Europe, and Asia. In most cities, about two-thirds of the enrollees are women. Fifteen to 25 percent are on welfare. Although functionally illiterate, the majority have had nine or more years of formal schooling, and a few are high school graduates.

Why They Take the Gamble

Undereducated adults enroll in ABE to qualify for better jobs, obtain a high school equivalency diploma, help their children with schoolwork, get a driver's license, learn to communicate in English, meet people, and for many other reasons. Motives are typically mixed and often poorly articulated. Nonetheless, interviews and other data suggest a rough typology that may be helpful in better understanding who the students are and why they come to ABE.

Individual motivations and corresponding goals fall into two basic categories: those that relate directly to adult work life and those that relate to family and community life or individual growth. Seting out to pass a test for job promotion or to obtain the GED certificate to qualify for a better job are obviously work related. Wanting to help children with schoolwork or to read from the Bible fall into the second category.

Age and sex of students are related to motives for coming and individual objectives. The great majority of young men and women, those in their teens to mid-twenties, come to ABE for job-related reasons. They are either unable to find work, or, more commonly, dissatisfied with their present jobs. With their working lives ahead of them, it is no surprise that they are concerned with improving their employment prospects. Most male students up to the age of forty-five or fifty continue to be mainly concerned with improving their work situations. But women in their mid-twenties to mid-forties are often primarily interested in being able to help their children with schoolwork, to speak to them in English, or to obtain more education to be more "fit" mothers. Older adults, men with their working lives behind them, and women with grown children come to ABE to "improve" themselves or to meet other people and socialize.

In the six cities originally studied, a large number of students appeared to be enrolled for job-related reasons.[8] But this group varied in proportion from city to city. Program philosophy, recruitment methods, and competing job training programs are influential factors determining this emphasis.

The Job Careerist

Many of those who want to upgrade their jobs see the high school equivalency diploma (GED) as an essential vehicle for doing so. The experience of being unable to get a decent job without a diploma has led many to believe, with justification, that educational credentials are the main factor in the competition for work. As a

young Puerto Rican woman trained in IBM keypunching explained her participation in ABE:

> "When I looked for a job, they asked for a high school diploma. They wanted two years of experience *and* the diploma."

Students occasionally feel bitter toward employers who require exams or credentials that bear little relation to the demands of a job. A middle-aged black man who had failed tests for the post office and city transit system stated angrily:

> "Everywhere you go you have to take a test for a job. And how you gonna take that test if you don't know a job? It's just a front. It's just a front cause a man can do the job without a college education. Schooling knocks me back every time."

Despite his feelings, he is attending school to obtain the education he believes he doesn't really need. Having failed to "beat the system," he has decided to go along with it. One can only guess at the numbers of ghetto youth or "hard core" unemployed who refuse to enroll in ABE or even job training programs because they are convinced that the cards are stacked against them.*

As indicated in Chapter 2, few of the hard-core unemployed are enrolled in ABE. Indeed, only 14 percent of ABE students were unemployed and looking for jobs in 1967.[9] The figure for New York City for the past several years has averaged only slightly higher. National statistics on the characteristics of unemployed ABE students are unavailable, but data from the six cities studied in depth indicated that few participants were unemployed men. Furthermore, mature males, particularly American-born blacks, are substantially underrepresented in ABE.

Although generally employed, the undereducated adults in ABE labor in low-status, low-paid, hard, and generally undesirable jobs. They work as stockboys, domestics, nurses' aides, deliverymen, and janitors; a large number work in light industry, in factories that make shirts, bottletops, and ball-point pens. Whatever they do and wherever they work, they are economically marginal. The jobs they would like to have involve a little more status, somewhat better working conditions, more security, and a livable wage. Women who work in factories would prefer to work in offices as clerks or secretaries; nurses' aides want to become licensed practical nurses;

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*Germane to this issue is the following question raised by an important study: "If students withdraw from high school when work prospects are poor, will adults take literacy training seriously if jobs are not the reward for the effort?", Robert Dentler and Mary Ellen Warshauer, *Big City Dropouts and Illiterates* (New York: Praeger, 1968), p. 67.

janitors and dishwashers aspire to civil service jobs with the post office, the transit system, or the parks department; and many, of course, want a promotion to a better job at their present place of work.

The stated goals of many students reflect the emphasis on the high school diploma in the world of work. Typical is a forty-seven year old man who never attended school. A friend taught him to read when he was sixteen years old. He now wants to earn a high school diploma in order to get a better job, and tells of the many jobs he has missed because he lacked a high school education. Others are less definite about their educational objectives. They just want more education to get a better job. A young Puerto Rican woman explained:

> "I came first to Manpower. I wanted a training job. They gave me a test that I failed. They told me I needed more education, a little bit of everything — math, reading, vocabulary. I would like to have a nice job and I'm trying hard to get it."

Some are victims of technological unemployment. A middle-aged black man was last employed as a superintendent in an apartment building, but he was evicted when the landlord installed an oil furnace. This happened to him three times in succession. "You can see why I want to get an education. I've been evicted three times. Every time they get an oil burner." His wife is ill, and he is desperate for a job, "most anything, just so it's work."

Many believe that the high school diploma is beyond their reach. A woman who speaks English poorly thinks that finishing high school would be too difficult for her. But she, too, wants a better job: "I want to learn English and math. I'd like to take another job better than the factory."

A few have high-paying but strenuous jobs that become more difficult with advancing years. A middle-aged Italian immigrant employed as a press machine operator runs seven or eight presses, but he feels that he will not be able to run that many machines for very long. He wants a high school diploma and maybe two years of college to qualify for a less arduous office job. A West Indian man, forty-two, is in a similar position. He is a machinist, but the work is heavy and gets more difficult for him as time goes by. He is enrolled in ABE to improve his English and math skills so he can enter a training program in radio electronics.

A provocative finding illustrated by these examples is the prevalence of a distinctive type of career pattern—really non-pattern—among the urban poor. Sociologists commonly think of career in middle-class contexts, as a "succession of jobs, arranged in a hier-

archy of prestige, through which persons move in an ordered (more-or-less predictable) sequence."[10] This is by no means true for the undereducated adults in ABE. Career is accurately perceived by them as a gently sloped movement to a "better job." Landry has pointed out that the career of the ABE student is almost always "disorderly" in the sense that it comprises a succession of jobs that are neither hierarchically ordered, nor in most cases, functionally related.[11] This is seen in the patchwork of discrete jobs (janitor, messenger boy, dishwasher) so typical in the work lives of ABE students.

Those who enroll in ABE for job-related reasons may be described as having a "job career." Most people, in fact, are in job careers. It is primarily upper-middle-class business people or professionals who engage in classic occupational careers of ordered upward mobility. The job career is based on simple job upgrading: a little more pay, somewhat more security, less onerous work, a bit more status. This is not to say that upgrading is unimportant. On the contrary, a little more money can make an enormous difference for those living at a subsistence level. A little more security and status, moreover, can profoundly affect the way a person feels about himself—and the way others feel toward him. Although the job careerist may never rise very far from the lower levels of the socioeconomic ladder, the modest gains he makes are important to him and can have a significant impact on his life.

When asked how much money they would like to make, how much education they want, or what sort of job they would like to have, nearly all the students interviewed revealed very low levels of educational and career aspiration. For many, particularly older adults, those burdened with family responsibilities, and those functioning at the lowest levels of literacy, modest aspirations may simply reflect the realities of life. But it is clear that many others are simply selling themselves short.

The Concerned Mother

Adults who enroll in ABE for job-related reasons — the job careerists — comprise the largest distinct category of urban ABE students. A second major type, a smaller but significant proportion in most programs, is the "concerned mother." A large number of women (and women outnumber men three to one) enroll in ABE to become better mothers. If they are Puerto Rican, Chicano, or foreign-born, they attend class to learn English. It is important to them to be able to speak to their children in English and to look after their children's interests in an English-speaking world. Similarly, many black as well as foreign-born mothers come to ABE

classes to be able to help their children with schoolwork. Another motivation is to keep the respect of children who are moving ahead of them in formal schooling or to set an example for school-age children. Many whose primary reason for attending ABE classes is to be better parents are also interested in improving their job prospects. For example, a middle-aged black mother told the interviewer that she wanted a high school diploma so she could "talk" to her better-educated children (a daugher was in college, a son in the air force), and to qualify for a good job in case she wanted to return to work. The concerned mother may find additional sources of motivation once she enrolls in ABE. A young black mother stated that, though her original reason for attending class was to be able to help her sixth-grade daughter with schoolwork, she soon discovered that she enjoyed learning: "Since I've started, now it's for both of us." These concerned mothers can be found in most ABE classrooms. Together, they constitute a substantial and significant minority in urban ABE programs.

The Self-Improver

Another discernible type of student found in ABE is the "self-improver." Many older people fall into this category, particularly housewives and men with their working lives behind them. These individuals were often unable to complete more than a few years of formal schooling, and welcome the opportunity to "better" themselves by enrolling in ABE. Many self-improvers were born and raised in the rural South and had to leave school as children to work in the fields. These include the aging victims of segregated schools: "We didn't have a very good education in Mississippi. The white kids would all go into the big city to school on buses. But there weren't any buses for us."

A secondary motivation for many self-improvers is to learn to read better so thay can participate more actively in church services, particularly reciting from the Scriptures:

> "I do a lot of work in my church and some things I'm fearful of doing. That's one reason (for returning to school). It's embarrassing if you're called upon."

Because they tend to be older and often socially isolated, the opportunity to meet others like themselves and to socialize is important to many self-improvers.

The Educational Careerist

A type related both to the self-improver and to the job careerist is the "educational careerist." Like the self-improver, the educa-

tional careerist places a high value on education. And like the job careerist, he is interested in a good job—in the future. At present, however, his primary concern is to obtain a high school diploma and perhaps to go on to college. Many educational careerists are intelligent and ambitious and have a strong future orientation. One young man in his mid-twenties, when asked if he would stay in school even if he found a good job, replied:

> "I still would, because I've always wanted it (the high school diploma). I just don't feel right without it. I don't feel secure without it. And I want to get to college if I possibly could."

His feelings typify the perspective of the educational careerist. Also typical is careful and generally realistic planning for the future. One young man from Costa Rica worked out a timetable for completing high school and going on to college. Another student explained that he would be ready for the GED exam in two years' time, after which he hoped to enter a local community college. When asked about his plans after finishing high school, another replied: "I will go on — I would be foolish not to." Many educational careerists are supported by parents or spouses and can afford to go on, but they are a small minority in ABE. The great majority who must get along as best they can with little income and heavy responsibilities do not even think of continuing their education beyond ABE or completion of the GED exam for a high school equivalency diploma.

Troubled Youth

It is ironic that some of the most scarred young victims of the inner-city ghetto should sit in the same classes with mothers determined that their children will escape such fate. Nevertheless, in some cities a small minority of ABE students are in one way or another socially deviant — either mentally retarded, emotionally disturbed, or angry high school "pushouts." These troubled youth range in age from sixteen to about twenty. They are more likely to be found in daytime classes, since most have nothing to do during the day, being either unemployable or unable to find a job.

For the emotionally disturbed or retarded adolescent who has been eased out of school or other institutions, ABE serves as a kind of day-care center or sheltered workshop. In one day school, retarded teenagers formed a small group that tended to stay together in various classes. Although not necessarily disruptive, retarded students can demand a lot of the teacher's time and thereby slow down the rest of the class. Most have unrealistic aspirations that can only lead to frustration. Typical is a youth who reads at the

third-grade level, but is determined to finish high school:

> "I am going to stay in this program for as long as I can. I am going to stick with this. And keep my chin up as long as I can. I want to get a diploma. I need only fifteen more credits for a high school diploma."

The high school pushouts present a different sort of problem. Unlike the retarded students, they are often resentful and angry and present discipline problems for the teacher. They, too, often stick together in small groups. A single class in one day school contained four young men who had been expelled from high school. All stated that they were enrolled in ABE in order to get a high school diploma, and all agreed that they disliked ABE even more than the high schools that had expelled them. In some cities, special arrangements are made for high school dropouts. Classes are often co-sponsored with the Neighborhood Youth Corps or a similar organization and held in storefronts or other non-school facilities. Some such arrangement may provide a more effective learning environment for these young people.

It should be emphasized that ABE students who might be classified as troubled youth constitute a very small proportion of the total. Only in one city studied, which has a large adult day school, did these troubled young people comprise an appreciable segment of the total ABE enrollment.

The Educated Alien

In most American cities foreign-born students comprise a substantial proportion—often a majority—of the total ABE enrollment. Although most come to ABE to learn to speak and perhaps read and write English, language facility is rarely sought for its own sake. Like native Americans, most foreign-born students want better jobs, to be better mothers, to go on to higher levels of formal education, or simply to "improve" themselves.

There are, however, distinct differences between the foreign-born who are U.S. citizens, or intend to become citizens, and aliens who come to the United States on tourist or student visas and plan to return home. The latter group constitutes a distinctive but small subpopulation in ABE. Most aliens on visas are considerably better educated than immigrant or native-born students. They enroll in ABE to learn English, either for their own interest or because they need remedial work before beginning college or graduate school in the United States. Many of those on tourist visas are at loose ends. Some attend classes in the hope of winning a student visa, which will permit them to stay longer in the United States. Others are

looking for Americans to marry so they can become citizens. Still others enroll in ABE in order to be able "to talk to people" or "get around better" while in the United States. Foreign-born students and tourists generally enroll in day classes, and are more often found in large cities on the East and West coasts.

The typology of ABE students presented here is certainly not exhaustive. There are additional minor types, for example the "Romeos" who enroll for the purpose of picking up girls, and their female counterparts who want to meet men. But the suggested categories appear to encompass the great majority of students who see ABE as a means for achieving various individual goals.

Getting Started

Before he decides to play, the prospective gambler must first hear about the game. In the six cities studied intensively, mass media advertising appeared to be relatively ineffectual in getting the word around. Of the students interviewed, only a small fraction indicated that they had learned about ABE through the radio or newspapers. For example, data from a survey of Detroit students indicate that only 12 percent of blacks and 8 percent of the foreign-born reported they had first learned of ABE through newspapers, radio, or television.

The most effective means of recruitment is word of mouth. Most of those interviewed had heard about ABE from family, friends, or co-workers. Often the friend or co-worker was a student himself. Interestingly enough, the Detroit survey indicated that two-thirds of the foreign-born, but only one-fourth of native blacks first heard of the program from a friend or family member. It appears that word gets around fast in the cohesive social network of immigrant ghettos.

The public schools are another source of information about ABE. Children are sent home with flyers, and parents hear about adult classes from teachers or at meetings or other affairs. Forty-one percent of blacks surveyed in Detroit, but only 17 percent of the foreign-born reported that they learned of ABE through the public schools. The difference may be due in part to the fact that the foreign-born tend to be younger and consequently are less likely to have children in school. Perhaps, too, the foreign-born are less involved with the schools because of the language problem.

Many community organizations serve as sources of referral or recruitment. Co-sponsors such as churches, unions, hospitals and businesses usually provide students as well as space in which to meet. Many are referred by welfare or employment agencies. Adults

who do not meet minimum educational standards for job training programs are sometimes referred to ABE.

In brief, illiterate adults learn about ABE opportunities in many ways, but family, friends, and co-workers seem to be the most common sources of information. Many hear about ABE through unions, churches, hospitals, prisons, and other co-sponsors. Referral by employment, welfare, or job-training agencies is another major source of students, particularly those interested in occupational upgrading. Still others hear about ABE through the public schools and the mass media. A few just walk in off the streets.

Some Initial Expectations

Partly because players rarely receive accurate information about the game, they typically enter the action with a very unclear notion of what it will be like. When asked about their expectations, ABE students gave vague answers ("I expected learning, general book learning"); contrasted ABE with earlier school experience ("I expected it would be like school at home. But it's different. I like it better than at home"); or simply acknowledged that they did not know what to expect ("I never thought about it. I expected it would help me a little further"). Not only are expectations diffuse, but even after some experience in the program students are not at all sure how it operates. Many have only the roughest idea of the "level" on which they are functioning, are unaware of such resources as counseling services that are available to them, and have only dim perceptions of where they are going and what is involved in getting there.

The majority of students tend not to be aware of, much less interested in, the official program goal of eighth grade "graduation." Although legislation passed by Congress in 1974 makes provision for high school level instruction, ABE at present is supposed to be an elementary education program for adults. Despite its official designation, however, to many students ABE means high school equivalency. This is what they are told by friends, what is sometimes implied in promotional literature ("Work toward a high school diploma!"), and this is what they want. And, in fact, in many cities preparation geared explicitly to the GED exam is offered for those who are interested, and in a few cases ABE is given a euphemistic designation, such as "Pre-High School Program."

It is hardly surprising that few see ABE as a basic skills or grade school equivalency program. A majority of those enrolled have completed nine or more years of schooling and some are high school graduates. The eighth-grade diploma has no meaning for these indi-

viduals. In fact, the eighth-grade diploma means little to anyone, except perhaps as a benchmark on the way to the GED certificate. Today, as the job careerists in ABE are well aware, almost any decent (or not so decent) job requires a high school diploma.

"Embarrassment" is the word students most often used to describe their feelings during the first weeks of class. Before he learns differently, the adult often feels that he is the only one in the class who is so "ignorant." He dreads the humiliation he believes will follow when his ignorance is revealed. But for those who remain in the program, anxiety and shame diminish rapidly with the awareness that others are equally "ignorant," and that, in fact, it is possible to learn:

> "I thought I would be confused. Thought I would be dumb, that I would quit, that others would be brighter. But then I saw what I needed and that others were not all bright. I feel very good coming to class. I feel good walking down the street. If anyone calls me a dumb dumb, I can say, 'Just give me time and I'll know the answers.' "

Those who stick it out for the first few sessions usually find that the ABE classroom is far from threatening — indeed, that it is relaxed, friendly, and informal — and that most teachers are warm and supportive, as they have to be if they are to retain their adult students.

Student Relationships

Observation of ABE classrooms revealed relatively little interaction among students and muted feelings of group identity, particularly in BEd, as opposed to ESL, classes. ABE classes tend to be aggregates of individuals rather than true groups. Absence of cohorts that move through the system together distinguishes ABE — and adult education generally — from most other forms of educational activity.

A fundamental reason for the characteristic lack of group identity is the considerable heterogeneity of student backgrounds. In many classes, variation in age, sex, and ethnicity, as well as ability and achievement level, is pronounced. Where students come from very similar backgrounds or constitute a preexisting group, as in many classes co-sponsored with community organizations or employers, there is more group cohesiveness. Other factors that militate against the development of group cohesiveness or a student subculture include the heavy turnover of students, which means that class members are continually leaving and being replaced by new and unfamiliar faces, the irregular attendance of many students, and the

limited time available for social interaction since classes typically meet only two nights a week for two to three hours. The emphasis on individualized instruction, or at least working alone at one's own pace, may also contribute to the social fragmentation of BEd classes. There is considerably more student interaction in ESL classes, where class discussions and pairing of students are more common.

When friendships develop among students, they tend to be with others of similar background. Although it is common for students to get to know two or three of their classmates, the friendship rarely extends beyond the classroom. The commonality of interest represented by the ABE class is perhaps too tenuous a basis for continuing friendships. It may be, too, that city dwellers in general, particularly the poor, are suspicious of strangers and chary of personal involvements.

Although ABE students are labeled "poor" and "disadvantaged" and lumped together in one category by middle-class educators and other professionals, they themselves are aware of numerous social distinctions and gradations. Intra-racial and intra-ethnic tension is common. There is, for example, a history of mutual antagonism between Jamaican- and American-born blacks, and Puerto Ricans from San Juan are often contemptuous of "hillbillies" from the inner island. And social status distinctions in American society are by no means confined to the middle or upper classes. In one ABE class held in a church, an illiterate, unemployed black man was ostracized by the majority of respectable black ladies who wished to disassociate themselves from a person they considered "low class." Outright hostility of this sort is rare, but the incident serves to illustrate an important characteristic of most ABE students — their essentially middle-class outlook. This is not surprising, since those who attend are a self-selected group determined to "better" themselves through education.

The lack of common cultural or group norms is complemented by the absence of the usual classroom rules and ritual. About the only norm considered important by both teachers and students is regular attendance. It has already been noted that students often complain that irregular attenders hold the class back because the teacher must review missed material for the benefit of absentees. But exemplary attendance records are the exception, not the rule. Overtime work, sickness in the family, and just plain fatigue are some of the factors that contribute to erratic attendance. Many students come directly to class after a long day of hard physical labor, often without time to eat or change clothes. As one individual put it, to come to class "you have to make a sacrifice."

The Locating Process

A key to understanding the perspective of ABE students is the concept of "locating." Like all students, they want to know how well they are doing and how far they have progressed in relation to their goals. Locating is relatively simple in schools and colleges because the chronological organization of the curriculum (college takes four years) and the grading system provide a student with unambiguous feedback on his progress or lack of it. The locating process in ABE is much more difficult because students do not receive grades and the time necessary to achieve one's objectives is not easily determined.

Key factors in the locating process are *the adult learner's goals, his time perspective,* and *the benchmarks* he employs to judge his progress. Goals serve as the constants in the locating "equation." As previously mentioned, most students come for job- or family-related reasons. For most of these students, however, the high school equivalency diploma is the most salient "instrumental" goal. Other goals are more immediate: to master fractions, to pass a test for job promotion, to gain proficiency in conversational English. Not everyone comes to ABE with a tangible goal in mind. Some attend class mostly for social reasons, and the retarded and emotionally disturbed come because they have no place else to go. For this small minority, the locating process is less important.

The chronological dimension is basic to the locating process. ABE students usually have some vague notion of how long it will take them to reach their goals, but that notion is continually revised as they move through the program. Initially, most have unrealistic timetables. One man, who read at the second-grade level, estimated that it would take him three months to pass the eighth-grade minimum competency test. It is common for adults entering with fourth- or fifth-grade reading skills to anticipate passing the GED exam within a year. After a few weeks in the program, perhaps after the first or second class meeting, the student is forced to revise his timetable radically. Many become discouraged at this point and drop out. Those who continue shift from a short- to a long-term time perspective:

> "When I first came here, I wanted to brush up for a month or so on my English. I wanted to get through here really quick. But now it looks like I'll be here for a while, at least until the end of the year."

Although there is a shift to a longer time perspective, the student seldom has more than a rough idea of how long it will take to reach his goal. In ABE, the requisite time to achieve a particular goal depends on such factors as initial achievement level, effort,

ability, and many other contingencies. Time, then, is never definitive for the adult learner who attempts to locate himself. He must rely on other more elusive benchmarks to measure his progress. These may be classified into two categories: those which permit the participant to judge whether or not he is making progress and those which tell the participant how far he has progressed in relation to his goal.

Most benchmarks fall in the first category. One is the "order of content" benchmark. The adult learner soon discovers that multiplication follows addition and that modifiers follow subjects and predicates. Progress is typically defined as follows: "I'm on fractions; I haven't come to decimals yet."

Indirect academic benchmarks also provide clues to students about their academic progress. The more advanced students are usually called on more often, and students are aware of this differentiating behavior. Similarly, one individual may be asked to help another with a particular problem. Differentiation in the amount or difficulty of work assigned, either work in-class or homework, is another form of indirect benchmark.

Direct academic benchmarks, those which tell a student how far he has progressed toward his goal, are scarce in ABE, but, because they are objective and unambiguous, provide particularly valuable information. Such benchmarks include results of standardized achievement tests, promotion to a higher-level class, and, in some situations, feedback from programmed instruction. Occasionally, a teacher or counselor will discuss with an individual precisely where he stands.

Finally, there are non-academic benchmarks — indicators of progress found outside the classroom. A job promotion is one example. More frequently, these benchmarks are less dramatic: an elderly man is able to read the newspaper with greater comprehension; a typist does not use the dictionary as much as she used to; an immigrant holds a simple conversation in English for the first time. For some, increased literacy leads to a kind of revelation:

> She began "looking around more," in stores, outside of school — and reading signs, etc. She finally came to "find out what people are saying."

The locating process in ABE is not easy, nor does it come naturally. Students learn to "dope out" their academic timetables through observation, trial and error, and asking questions. Benchmarks are often muted, sometimes unreliable, and seldom definitive enough to permit an accurate assessment of progress.

The paucity of clear benchmarks that enable students to deter-

mine how well they are doing and to assess progress produces feelings of confusion, discouragement, and frustration among those who have specific goals and are serious learners, particularly in intermediate and advanced classes. Order of content and indirect academic benchmarks provide information relative to others, but seldom tell an individual much about where he stands on the road to be traveled. Direct academic benchmarks, such as promotion to a higher level, achievement test scores, or an assessment by a teacher or a counselor, do provide the locating information that participants want, but are rare in ABE. For example, promotion to a higher level may never occur. Particularly in decentralized sites, there may be no higher-level class. Testing and counseling could also provide participants with clear indicators of progress, but seldom do. Where counselors exist, they are usually so overextended that participants have little contact with them. The "thinness" of counseling services is exacerbated in decentralized, outreach-type programs. Although most programs purport to administer standardized tests, it is not uncommon to find students who have never seen a test. Even when tested, they are seldom told the results unless they ask. Although some, particularly at the lower levels, may be discouraged by test results, for the majority of serious learners the lack of reliable feedback on performance is what is really discouraging.

Several problems or obstacles that students commonly encounter in ABE have been discussed: lack of accurate information about the program, a difficulty that could be overcome by an orientation session; repetition and discontinuity in instruction caused by erratic attendance; and lack of clear benchmarks that permit assessment of progress and provide positive reinforcement. Students (and teachers too) have identified two additional problems that interfere with learning in ABE classrooms: the continuous enrollment of new students and the lack of even rough grouping by achievement level.

The universal practice of permitting whomever shows up to enroll at any time can result in continuing setbacks to classroom learning. The heavy dropout rate in conjunction with pressure to keep enrollment figures high, and a sincere desire to serve those who are ready to be served, lie at the root of the problem. Unfortunately those who enter in the middle of a term require a great deal of the teacher's time. Late enrollees are seldom carefully screened and may be placed in an inappropriate class, further compounding the problem.

The enormous variation in achievement and ability levels in ABE classes is also viewed as a major problem by both teachers and

students. The difficulty teachers face in dealing with a one-room schoolhouse is underscored by students who complain that "the reason I'm not learning enough is that there are too many levels here." Efforts to establish reasonably homogeneous levels of achievement in ABE classes are hampered by inadequate diagnostic and placement procedures, limitations on the number of classes in a particular facility, and the reluctance of many teachers and especially participants to part ways when it is time for advancement.

The View from a Distance

In a very real sense, ABE programs are "creaming" operations. The least literate and most alienated tend to be excluded. Exclusion of persons less socialized to middle-class norms and school practice has advantages and disadvantages. The program is more likely to enjoy "success," teachers will have fewer problems, and adult education agencies will be able to avoid large-scale change. But ABE cannot pretend to have developed an organizational structure or methods and materials relevant for any but a limited segment of its target population. To reach hard-core illiterates and angry young dropouts, particularly in black ghettos, will require radical program innovations, effective coordination of health, employment and other social services, and a financial commitment by government of a magnitude unknown in Title III. It is an open question whether this is a game which can be operated by the public schools.

Notes

1. National Advisory Committee on Adult Basic Education, *First Annual Report* (Washington, D.C. 1968), p. 46. Subsequent references to national survey are based on this report. A more recent survey of a national sample of ABE students aged 16-44 found median monthly earnings for those who worked to be $300. William Kent, "Data on Selected Students in Adult Basic Education Programs, 1971-72; A Preliminary Report from an Ongoing Longitudinal Study" (Falls Church, Va.: Systems Development Corporation, 1972). Mimeographed.
2. Kent, "Data on Selected Students," Chapt. 4, p. 7. This survey excluded students over 44 years of age.
3. Detroit Public Schools, Division of Adult Education, "Project R.E.A.D. Survey" (1967). Mimeographed. Subsequent references to Detroit survey data are based on this document.
4. National Center for Educational Statistics, *Adult Basic Education Program Statistics: Students and Staff Data, July 1, 1969-June 30 1970* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1971), pp. 24-25.
5. Ibid., p. 18.

6. National Advisory Committee on Adult Basic Education, *First Annual Report*, p. 45.
7. Kent, "Data on Selected Students," Chapt. 4, p. 3. Median number of grades completed was 10.2. Fourteen percent were high school graduates.
8. See also Kent, "Data on Selected Students," Chapt. 4, p. 15. In this survey of ABE students under 45 years of age, 31 percent said "a better job" was their main reason for coming.
9. National Advisory Committee on Adult Basic Education, *First Annual Report*, p. 46.
10. Howard S. Becker, "The Career of the Chicago Public Schoolteacher," *American Journal of Sociology*, 57 (March 1952): 470.
11. L. Bartholomew Landry, "Rescuing the Functional Illiterate: A Study of Organizational Development and Socialization in an Adult Education Agency" (Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1971), pp. 225-226.

Chapter 4

Teachers and Counselors

A trifle distraught after an exacting evening at the gaming board, Harry the Horse was once heard to muse, "Dealers are spoilers. They screw up the odds. They intrude into the natural relationship between a player and Lady Luck. You end up betting against them instead of taking your chances directly with Her. Like all middlemen, they jack up the prices. Sometimes it's enough to make a man want to switch to the ponies."

Instructors in ABE cannot deny that they are out to screw up the odds in the learning game. But, as dealers go, they are something special — middlemen whose function is to deflate the price of staying in the action. They not only try to fix the game so every player scores as often as possible, but they have to help them break old losing habits and show them how to play to win. It's a tall order, one your run-of-the-mill dealer would not begin to fill. It takes some doing. And, like any other game, the real artists are few and far between.

By recent count, there are 26,000 instructors working in Title III classes.[1] Nearly a fifth teach in public school programs in cities of over 100,000 in population. These big-city teachers are young (more than half under forty), three-fifths female, and, surprisingly, are often from minority backgrounds. An impressive 29 percent are black — three times the national proportion in the public schools.

Six percent are Chicano, compared with one percent in the public schools nationally.[2]

Eighty percent are part-timers with ABE, and two out of three teach full time in the public schools, a third in elementary grades, and a fourth in secondary. About 18 percent of the part-timers are housewives, most with training or experience as teachers. Half the full-time teachers also came out of public school teaching, while the rest have varied backgrounds, mostly in and around education — counselors, supervisors, administrators, and the like.

The predominant pattern of work is two or three hours a night twice a week. If you teach for ABE, there is an even chance you will be teaching solely native-born adults. A fifth of the teachers work only with foreign-born students in English as a second language, another fifth teach both groups. The remainder are employed in other roles, often as learning lab instructors. ABE teachers are green. Half have been in the program only a couple of years or less, most less. A scant third are old hands with more than four years' experience.

The large numbers of relatively inexperienced teachers, coupled with the unique problems of teaching poor and undereducated adults, has stimulated a flurry of efforts at in-service training. Eight out of ten teachers have participated in local workshops, classroom observations, formal coursework, or state and regional institutes. Most have been involved in more than one form of in-service training: two-thirds in local workshops, a third in a classroom with experienced teachers, a little less than a third in university courses in adult education, and a fourth in a regional summer institute. Almost all found each of the various forms of in-service training helpful. However, university courses and regional institutes received somewhat higher ratings than local workshops.

The Rake-off*

There seem to be plenty of eager aspirants for dealer slots in ABE. What is the payoff? Obviously, few enter a teaching career in ABE for reasons of prestige and security. ABE in the public schools is still a marginal operation, and the fledgling profession of adult education does not enjoy the same recognition as the more established educational specialties. More to the point, however, is the fact that full-time career opportunities in ABE are at present very limited. As only one teacher in five is employed full-time, and only half of these

*This section is based on interview data.

full-time teachers are salaried, almost all are paid an hourly wage, have little job security, and receive few if any employee benefits. Thus, only one ABE teacher in ten can be said to be a career adult educator with status comparable to that of teachers employed in the elementary and secondary schools.

The great majority of teachers then, are part time, and most moonlight in ABE to supplement their primary source of income. This is often a source of embarrassment, but universally recognized. Teachers who need to earn extra money turn to what they can do best — teach. Moonlighting in ABE permits them to maintain their self-respect in a way that a night job as salesclerk, waiter, or gas station attendant could not. A convenient schedule of working six to nine hours a week at a salary that may range to $14.00 an hour is an attractive proposition.

While, for many, teaching in ABE is just a good part-time job, others have different or more complex motives. Certainly few who stay in the program fail to find rewards other than money alone.

> Mr. P. said that originally he had taken the position as a project teacher to have something to do with his evenings. He explained that later he became interested in assisting adults to better themselves. He went on to relate some experiences with former students who had gone through his class into the high school classes and to practical nurse training.

One important reward is service. Not infrequently, teachers see ABE as a unique chance to use their professional training at the cutting edge of significant social change — "where the action is." They value the opportunity to help victims of social injustice and educational deprivation and to provide personal leadership for the struggle of oppressed minority groups to help themselves.

As one teacher put it:

> "We're giving them something which society cannot — quality education, psychological relationships. We do far more than what's expected. We provide a means of education for people who would not have access otherwise."

These are the teachers who see their role in ABE as an opportunity . . .

> "to teach them the basic education they need in everyday life. Just to give them a feeling that they've accomplished something, attained their goal — whatever it may be."

Aside from the money and the chance to do useful and satisfying work, teachers are attracted to ABE because of the lack of disciplinary and motivational problems common to elementary and high schools and because certification requirements are often flexible or nonexistent. These factors tend to be especially important in

attracting full-time teachers. Some quite frankly say that they are refugees from the chaos of public school classrooms. Women with grown children and others with college degrees, but lacking teacher certification, often find ABE a point of access into the teaching profession.

The low-pressure institutional environment and the autonomy afforded by many ABE programs are also important to teachers, particularly those who teach full time. They are seldom under pressure to complete a particular unit within a given time period, the tyranny of testing is relatively relaxed, and student competition is minimal. There is seldom a required curriculum or pre-determined course of study. Methods and materials are usually not prescribed. The teacher decides what and how to teach.

Some find a special challenge in the ambiguity of this highly unstructured educational milieu. Confronted with a heterogenous class of adults, the teacher must somehow determine levels of performance and ability and develop effective teaching strategies. When he discovers that the class consists of adults with widely varying skill levels and a great variety of needs and expectations, the teacher realizes that he must draw heavily on his own ingenuity.

> "Besides the money, I enjoy it. It's rewarding, keeps my mind alert. I'm always thinking of new ideas and techniques. You feel a sense of accomplishment maybe more than in the day, a sense of power."

The pay-off for most dealers is attractive. The money is good, at least for the part-time moonlighters, the work is seen as having high social value, the institutional milieu is informal and relaxed, there are few disciplinary problems, and the task of working with undereducated adults is interesting and challenging. For those who want a full-time teaching job but do not possess the standard credentials, ABE is often an attractive option.

From the Teacher's Viewpoint

How do teachers view the students in ABE? What do they try to accomplish in the classroom and what problems do they encounter? What do teachers think about the way the program is run? How do they view their relationships with supervisors and administrators? In short, what does ABE look like through the teacher's eyes?

The Students

In Chapter 3 it was asserted that, while ABE students are generally poor, few programs reach the poorest, most illiterate, and most alienated of the undereducated population — those often stereotyped as the "hard core." The perceptions of teachers support

this assertion. Only one in four indicated that half or more of his students fitted the description "hard-core, ghetto poor." Not surprisingly, teachers of the native-born characterized more of their students as hard-core poor than did ESL teachers. Black BEd teachers described a somewhat higher proportion of their students as ghetto poor than did whites.* Other teacher characteristics such as age, sex, years of ABE experience, and professional background were not related to perceptions of students' socio-economic status.

There is little doubt that there are more than superficial differences between the non-English speaking who attend ESL classes and the native-born blacks who comprise the great majority of other ABE students in large cities. In many ways, ESL and BEd are two different games, each with its own set of participants, rules, and rewards.

A natural question to ask teachers is what they think of their students' academic ability and motivation. There are striking differences in the way teachers assess ESL and BEd students. For example, 58 percent of ESL teachers, but only 42 percent who teach the native-born, describe their classes as consisting of a minimum (0-24 percent) of low-ability students. With regard to motivation, only 30 percent of BEd teachers, compared to 47 percent of ESL teachers, characterize the great majority (75-100 percent) of their students as highly motivated.**

In sum, a large majority of ESL teachers feel that most of their students are highly motivated and cannot be characterized as having low intellectual ability. A majority of BEd teachers also feel that most of their students are highly motivated, but nearly three-fifths characterize a quarter or more of their students as low in intellectual ability. The upshot, of course, is that teachers see native-born black adults as having somewhat less intellectual ability than foreign-born or other non-English speaking students. The differential cannot be attributed to the teacher's race, since black and white BEd teachers do not differ in their assessments of student ability. As noted in Chapter 3, native-born participants on the average are poorer, less well educated, and less middle class in outlook than the non-

*A statistically significant difference. See Table 4A, Appendix A. In the remainder of this chapter important, statistically significant findings are marked by an asterisk which refers the reader to a complete contingency table, including Chi Square values, located in Appendix A.

**For complete data on ability and motivation, see Tables 4B and 4C in Appendix A.

English speaking who enroll in ESL. It is germane to recall that BEd teachers more often described their students as "hard-core ghetto poor" than did teachers in ESL: Variations in perceived ability appear to be due, in part at least, to differences in educational preparation and life circumstances that distinguish native-born participants from the non-English speaking.

Many students come to ABE with unrealistic or inaccurate notions of what the program is all about. Teachers were asked to indicate the proportion of their students who had "unrealistic expectations of time and effort required." Fewer than half reported only a small proportion (0-24 percent) had unrealistic expectations, and one teacher in four felt that half or more of his students were unrealistic in regard to required time and effort. BEd teachers reported a slightly higher proportion of unrealistic students.

Lack of participant self-confidence was thought to be widespread. Three out of four in both ESL and BEd classes reported that a quarter or more of their students could be characterized as lacking self-confidence. However, while 20 percent of white BEd teachers desribed the great majority (75-100 percent) of their students as lacking self-confidence, only six percent of black teachers did so.*

To gauge the affective tone of the teacher-student relationship, which by observation appeared highly positive, teachers were asked what proportion of their students they considered "warm and friendly." About 70 percent of all teachers characterized the great majority (75-100 percent) of their students as warm and friendly. Again, differences emerged between teachers of native- and foreign-born adults. Nearly a fifth more ESL than BEd teachers described most (75-100 percent) of their students as warm and friendly. Part of this difference, however, is due to divergent perceptions of warmth and friendliness between black and white BEd teachers. Fourteen percent more black than white BEd teachers described the large majority of their students as warm and friendly.**

So, teachers see native-born, mostly black students and non-English speaking students as different in many respects. Native-born students are perceived as more representative of the hard-core poor, somewhat less capable and motivated, a little more likely to have unrealistic expectations about the program, and slightly less warm and friendly. A large percentage of all students were viewed

*See Table 4D, Appendix A.

**See Table 4E, Appendix A.

as having low self-confidence. Black teachers characterized a somewhat greater proportion of their students as ghetto poor, saw fewer as having low self-confidence, and perceived more of them as being warm and friendly.

Teachers who taught full time in elementary and secondary schools (a total of 537) were asked to compare this experience with teaching in ABE. Around three-fourths strongly disagreed that ABE participants were less intellectually curious, less capable of learning, or less highly motivated. Half strongly disagreed that ABE students are more homogeneous in ability and achievement. The vast majority agreed strongly that the ABE classroom atmosphere is more relaxed and informal, about three-fifths strongly agreed that teaching adults is more personally satisfying, almost half expressed agreement that adult students need more encouragement than children or youth, and two-fifths indicated that they feel closer to their adult students. Clearly the myth that adults are less intellectually curious and less able to learn than young people is overwhelmingly refuted by those best able to judge from their own direct experience.

Again, discrepancies appeared between BEd and ESL teachers; nearly half the former but only a quarter of the latter strongly agreed that their adult students need more encouragement than children. Moreover, ESL teachers were slightly more likely to agree that adults have more positive self images and to disagree that adults are less motivated.

Instructional Goals

Information on the relative importance of broad instructional goals was obtained by asking teachers to rank order the importance of five goals on the basis of how significant they themselves believed each goal to be. Teacher rankings of goals, by type of class are shown in Table 4-1.

It may prove disconcerting to some, but the official objective of eighth-grade completion is seen by teachers as among the least important program goals, as is preparation for high school equivalency. Interestingly, however, one in five BEd instructors rated the latter goal first in importance, even though at the time of the survey high school level instruction was officially proscribed by federal regulations. What are the most important goals? It is clear from Table 4-1 that for a majority of ESL teachers increased competency in language skills is the paramount objective. But for BEd teachers, and for a significant minority in ESL, the most important objectives are increased self-confidence and ability to cope with adult responsibilities and problems.

Table 4-1

Teacher Rankings of Importance of ABE Goals, by Type of Class (In Percent, N=1135)

Goals	Rank Order of Importance									
	First		Second		Third		Fourth		Fifth	
	ESL	BEd	ESL	BEd	ESL	BEd	ESL	BEd	ESL	BEd
Increased self-confidence	24	35	46	36	25	17	4	9	2	3
Completion of 8th grade equivalence	2	6	3	12	15	14	66	42	14	26
Increased competency in language skills	56	8	23	17	19	43	2	20	0	12
Preparation for high school equivalency exam	3	20	2	10	8	14	16	17	71	39
Increased ability to cope with adult life roles and problems	23	36	26	27	34	14	9	11	8	12

Official pronouncements not withstanding, ABE at the classroom level will be strongly influenced by these perceptions of priorities. Where students or administrators disagree with teachers about broad purposes, problems may be anticipated; when programs are evaluated without recognizing teacher priorities, measures of program progress may focus on the wrong reality.

Teachers may attribute great importance to such broad and commendable goals as enhanced self-confidence and the ability of their students to cope with adult problems, but, as reported in Chapter 2, what gets taught as content in the classroom is pretty much the same old stuff, the traditional 3 R's. The emphasis that teachers report giving to various subjects is depicted in Table 4-2.

Almost all teachers report placing great emphasis on language skills. Over three-fourths in BEd place great emphasis on arithmetic; the same proportion in ESL give it little or none. In contrast, fewer than one teacher in three puts great emphasis on health and consumer education, social studies, or ethnic heritage. Coping received somewhat more emphasis, particularly from ESL teachers. The over-

Table 4-2

Degree of Emphasis Teachers Give to Various Subjects, by Type of Class (In Percent, N=1135)

Subject	Degree of Emphasis					
	Little or None		Some		Great	
	ESL	BEd	ESL	BEd	ESL	BEd
Arithmetic	76	13	14	11	10	76
Reading, language skills	3	4	3	4	94	92
Health education	70	52	22	26	9	21
Consumer education	45	36	26	33	29	32
Social studies, civics	42	31	32	38	27	31
Ethnic or racial heritage	57	56	24	25	19	20
Coping (how to apply for a job, obtain legal assistance, deal with landlords)	29	33	23	28	49	38

all picture is clear: ABE is heavily oriented toward the traditional 3 R's and other subject areas are given more lip service than real attention.

Black BEd teachers, however, again depart from the general norm. They report significantly greater emphasis on health and consumer education, racial heritage, and coping. Table 4-3 shows the proportions of black and white BEd teachers reporting "great emphasis" on each of these content areas.

Black BEd teachers are considerably more likely than whites to emphasize subject matter that ostensibly has high salience for poor and undereducated adults living in urban ghettos. One wonders why this is so. Perhaps the answer lies partly in the fact that many black teachers have themselves come from ghetto neighborhoods and have a keener understanding of the problems and needs of the inner-city poor. Most teachers know that the poor are often gullible consumers, are not familiar with basic health practices, need to cultivate pride in their racial heritage, and often do not know how to cope with the everyday demands of urban life. Black teachers may do something about it in their classes because they are more sensitive to the importance of these problems in the lives of

Table 4-3

Percent of Black and White BEd Teachers Reporting Great Emphasis on Selected Subject Areas (N=478)

Subject	Percentage Reporting Great Emphasis	
	Black	White
Health education	36	11
Consumer education	45	23
Ethnic or racial heritage	28	13
Coping	58	24

their students and more aware of the necessity to help students meet these needs in order to maintain their continuing involvement in ABE.

Barriers and Boosts to Learning

It is important to know what is taught and why, but also to determine what gets in the way of effective teaching and learning. Fieldwork findings, reported in Chapter 2, suggested several impeding factors, including the problem of too many achievement levels and discontinuity caused by irregular attendance and the sporadic influx of new students. Teachers were surveyed to find the degree to which they felt each of several factors interfered with the instructional process. Responses are given in Table 4-4.

As Table 4-4 shows, the survey data support earlier fieldwork findings that irregular attendance, variation in skill and ability levels, and continuous enrollment are the most significant factors that interfere with teaching and learning in ABE. Despite much talk about the inadequacy of instructional materials for adults, fewer than one-fifth of the teachers rated this factor as a major problem. Roughly twice as many ESL than BEd teachers reported variation in skill or ability levels and continuous enrollment as greatly interfering with the teaching and learning process. The reason for this probably lies in the way in which ESL classes are normally conducted. While BEd instruction is often individualized to some extent, ESL classes

Table 4-4

Teacher Ratings of Extent to Which Various Factors Interfere with Teaching and Learning, by Type of Class (In Percent, N=1135)

Factor	Extent of Interference					
	Little or None		Some		Great	
	ESL	BEd	ESL	BEd	ESL	BEd
Irregular attendance	22	16	22	28	56	57
Class too large	61	73	15	15	24	11
Too much variation in ability and/or skill levels	25	47	25	27	50	27
Low academic ability	63	58	23	25	13	16
Lack of motivation	80	65	10	18	9	18
Poor instructional materials	58	69	21	15	20	17
Student fatigue	53	48	22	28	24	24
Continuous enrollment of new students	29	55	23	20	49	25

are characterized by continuous class-level instruction. This start-from-scratch, whole-class approach runs into difficulties when students are not functioning at comparable skill levels or when new students enter the class after the instructional sequence has begun.[3] Likewise, irregular attendance results in falling behind. These factors loom less large when instruction is more individualized.

Teachers were also asked what one factor interferes most with effective teaching. Irregular attendance was the most serious problem for more than 40 percent of both ESL and BEd teachers. Significantly, it is not the students or the materials but the context of the learning situation — the mix of students, absenteeism, turnover — that appears to constitute the greatest obstacle to success in teaching and learning.

Absenteeism and student turnover are severe and endemic problems in ABE, as in adult education generally. In our national survey, teachers were asked to estimate the proportion of students absent at any given class meeting. One in five estimated absenteeism in the 10 to 24 percent range, and nearly a quarter reported 25 to 49 percent of the students absent at any one class session. ESL and BEd

teachers gave almost identical responses. Given those figures, it is not hard to understand why irregular attendance is seen by so many teachers as the major impediment to classroom success.

The high dropout rate in ABE is another serious problem. Two-fifths of the teachers estimated that 10 to 24 percent of their students drop out by the sixth week of class. Another 17 percent placed the dropout rate in their classes during the first five weeks in the 25 to 49 percent range. Since students continue to drop out after the initial weeks of class, these estimates of attrition are conservative. One fact that can produce a "double take" reaction is that 54 percent of black teachers report a dropout rate of less than 10 percent. Only 31 percent of white teachers reported this measure of success.

This startling finding spurred further analysis of the data for an explanation. The reader will recall that black BEd teachers reported greater emphasis on such non-traditional subject areas as consumer and health education, racial heritage and coping. It seemed likely that emphasis on these subjects might explain more of the variation in dropout rates than race alone. Consequently, an index of non-traditional emphasis[4] was constructed which resulted in the classification of all BEd teachers into three categories ranging from low to high on non-traditional emphasis. As suspected, black BEd teachers who scored high on the non-traditional index reported lower dropout rates than did black teachers who scored low on the index. Significantly, white teachers who scored high on the non-traditional index reported lower dropout rates than whites who scored low, but the dropout rate for high scoring white teachers was greater than for high scoring black teachers.*

It seems that teachers who emphasize content of direct relevance to the lives of ghetto adults (consumer and health education, racial heritage, coping skills) are more likely than others to be successful in retaining their students. The data also suggest that race has a modest independent effect on retention. Black teachers retain their (mostly black) students better than whites, although whites who emphasize non-traditional subjects are more successful than whites who do not. These results, of course, by no means indicate that white teachers cannot be effective with black students.**

*Complete data are given in Tables 4-F and 4-G, Appendix A..

**For a fuller treatment of these findings, see Gordon G. Darkenwald, "Some Effects of the 'Obvious Variable': Teacher's Race and Holding Power with Black Adult Students," *Sociology of Education*, 48 (forthcoming, 1975).

One would also expect attendance rates to be related to emphasis on non-traditional subjects. This seems to be the case. Fifty-six percent of black BEd teachers who scored high on the non-traditional index, but only 18 percent who scored low reported less than 10 percent of the students absent at any one class session. The comparable figures for white teachers were 30 and 17 percent respectively.

Further investigation into the relationship between teacher race, non-traditional emphasis and retention would probably prove fruitful since these findings have implications for the ABE curriculum, in-service education, and staff selection. Official attendance records, for example, might provide firmer evidence for reaching conclusions than teacher self-reports. It may be, too, that teachers who score high on the non-traditional index possess certain characteristics that are more important in retaining students than the subject matter they emphasize in the classroom. If this is so, these characteristics are somewhat elusive since no relationship was found between score on the non-traditional index and such teacher variables as age, sex, ABE teaching experience, and professional background.

Why do so many adult students drop out? According to teachers, the most important single factor is change in work schedule. Fifty-eight percent ranked work schedule as the most important factor. Discouragement over lack of progress was rated first by 17 percent of the teachers (probably conservative, inasmuch as this can be interpreted as an admission of teacher failure), followed by child care (15 percent), and moving away (10 percent). In short, the work and family responsibilities of adults affect not only regularity of attendance, but also sticking with the program once enrolled.

This discussion of how the teacher sizes up the classroom situation has touched on broad goals, subject matter emphasis, factors which interfere with learning, and the problems of absenteeism and attrition. But what is the payoff? How much are students learning? How well are they progressing toward their goals? Even tentative answers are hard to come by. An admittedly biased index, but an important one of interest here, is the teacher's subjective judgment of how well his or her students are progressing. A fifth of the teachers felt that fewer than half their students were making "satisfactory progress." About half report 50-74 percent progressing satisfactorily; less than a third pegged the success rate any higher. There was little difference between ESL and BEd teacher responses, and their assessments were independent of age, sex, race, or years of ABE experience.

Teacher expectations, perceptions, and definitions of satisfactory progress are obviously highly variable, but these findings are somewhat surprising in the light of the prevailing ideology of minimum failure. Maybe everyone is made to feel like a winner in ABE, but they are not perceived as such by the teachers. Nor is there evidence of teachers' judging student progress against their own past performance, whereby most serious students would be considered as making satisfactory progress. Instead, teachers have a set of norms for judging individual progress which is probably based upon how other participants do in the classroom.

The Setup

So far, this chapter has dealt with the perceptions and attitudes of teachers toward students and the instructional process. But students, teachers, and classrooms are only part of an institutional system involving general goals and social norms, bureaucratic regulations, and administrators. How do teachers view the system?

Overall, attitudes toward administrative superiors and feelings about the program itself are strongly positive, although younger teachers tend to be more critical than their older colleagues. Perceptions of the system do not seem to be related to other teacher characteristics, such as race and sex, although the views of teachers in the largest programs are somewhat more negative.

Well over two-thirds of the teachers surveyed strongly agreed that program administrators are aware of their most important classroom problems, that they have a great deal of autonomy in the classroom, that morale was high in the program, and that the administration does a good job of supplying the necessary support services and materials. More than half the teachers strongly disagreed with statements to the effect that they get little help with classroom problems from administrators and supervisors and that the ABE administration fails to provide adequate in-service training.

An apparent problem area for many is feedback on performance and the related issue of how performance is evaluated. A third of the teachers strongly agreed with the statement that they get little feedback on how well they are doing their job. In addition, a significant minority, particularly in the youngest age group, agreed with the proposition that their performance is evaluated mostly on the basis of attendance figures. Lack of feedback on performance may be partially due to the organizational setup, since classes are often held in the evening in scattered locations and many teachers work in almost total isolation from administrators and supervisors. The use of attendance figures to judge teacher performance derives from

the pressures of the numbers game. For administrators, the overriding concern is to keep enrollments high to justify budgets based mainly on head counts. Thus the most salient index of teaching performance is holding power.

Significantly, younger teachers (under thirty) are more likely to disagree that administrators are aware of their classroom problems and to agree that they get little feedback on their performance. In addition, younger teachers give the administration lower ratings for supplying necessary support services and materials and for providing adequate in-service education. Perhaps most significant, teachers under thirty are considerably more likely to disagree (or at least not to agree) that teacher morale is high.

Experience also plays a part in teacher perspectives. For example, a little less than half the teachers under thirty with one year's experience agreed strongly that they got little feedback from administrators. Less than a third with four or more years in the classroom agreed. The same pattern was observed for the thirty to thirty-nine age group, but interestingly, the perceptions of older teachers on feedback from administrators were unaffected by experience. Age is mediated by experience on other issues, too. Young teachers with one year's experience, compared to those with four or more years, are slightly less likely to agree that morale is high and slightly more likely to agree that in-service education is inadequate. On the positive side, the least experienced younger teachers are a bit more likely to agree that administrators are aware of their problems and that the administration does a good job of supplying necessary support services and materials.

Although experience is an important intervening variable, differences within age groups due to experience are less pronounced than differences between age groups. Age itself is clearly an overriding factor in accounting for variability in teacher perceptions of the program. There appear to be a few young Turks in the ranks of ABE teachers who are neither so sanguine nor satisfied as their older colleagues.

One other variable that seems to have some influence on the way teachers view the system is program size. Predictably, teachers in the largest programs, those that employ more than one-hundred teachers, tend to agree that they get little help with classroom problems and that their performance is judged mostly on the basis of attendance figures. On the other hand, teachers in the largest programs see themselves as having somewhat greater autonomy in the classroom. In large programs, direct supervision tends to be minimal, and teachers must rely to an even greater extent on their own

resources. From the teacher's point of view, this has advantages as well as disadvantages.

Satisfaction with administrators and with the way the program is run does not necessarily imply satisfaction with one's job. To get at the latter, teachers were asked to rate their overall satisfaction with their work in ABE. An impressive 86 percent said they found ABE teaching "very satisfying," and fewer than 1 percent checked "not very satisying" or "not satisfying." ESL and BEd teachers reported equally high levels of job satisfaction, as did males and females and blacks and whites. Teachers under thirty on the other hand, indicated considerably less satisfaction. Only 78 percent of the youngest teachers said they were very satisfied, compared with 90 percent of the teachers in the fifty or over category.* Once again, more experience in the classroom tended to counteract the effect of age. In the under-thirty category, 75 percent with one year's experience were very satisfied, compared to 87 percent with four or more years in the classroom. First-year teachers in the older age categories were also slightly less satisfied than veterans. One reason for differences in satisfaction between novices and veterans is simply that satisfied teachers tend to stay with the program longer while those who are dissatisifed tend to leave.

Payoff for the Players

For the players ABE is not a penny ante proposition. They gamble under pressure. For two or three hours a night, twice a week, learning fractions or vowel sounds or sitting in front of a teaching machine is no picnic after a hard day's work. It is a serious business for dealers, too. They know how high the stakes are for participants in the program. Teachers realize that the buck stops with them, that ABE is truly the last gamble on education.

What is in the pot? Will ABE make a real difference in the lives of undereducated adults with all their handicaps? The players think so or they would not be there. Dealers also think it makes a difference, but they disagree as to how much. Teachers were posed the following question: "In your judgment, how much difference does ABE make to the life chances of the average adult student?" Responses by age and race are shown in Table 4-5.**

Age and race once again appear important in explaining differences in teacher opinions. The youngest, who tend to be more

*For a full breakdown by age, see Table 4H, Appendix A.

**Complete data by age and race/ethnicity are found in Tables 4I and 4J in Appendix A.

Table 4-5

Teacher Opinions about Difference ABE Makes to Life Chances of Students, for All Teachers and by Age and Race (In Percent)

Amount of Difference	All Teachers	By Age		By Race	
		Under 30	Over 50	Black	White
Great difference	55	43	64	66	50
Some difference	43	53	36	32	48
Little or no difference	2	4	0	2	2

critical of the program, are also less sanguine about the ultimate impact of ABE on the lives of individual students. Black teachers are considerably more hopeful about the lasting benefits their students will derive from ABE. Young first-year teachers were slightly less inclined than young teachers with more experience to believe that ABE would make a great difference in the lives of their students.

ABE teachers, like their students, are an aggregate of very different people with varying experiences and perspectives. There are commonalities, to be sure, but one is equally impressed by the range of differences among them. This chapter has tried to get at the roots of differences among teachers in belief, opinion, and perception. Some of the important factors underlying these differences among teachers have been identified. The type of class taught and the teacher's race and age tell you something about differences in the way they view their students and the ABE system, but much remains unaccounted for. Further scrutiny of the teachers seems necessary if the odds in favor of the students are to be significantly improved.

Counseling Practice

There is a lack of consensus as to the most effective role for counselors in ABE. Some do little else but testing. Others are prodded by supervisors who believe "coping with the system is the name of the game," and that counselors should concentrate on helping students deal with the power structure.

Counseling efforts range from a system with a specialized staff of thirteen part-time counselors coordinated by a supervisor of guidance, to those in which counseling is left solely to teachers. Even with a separate counseling staff, the amount of counselor time available to students is limited, and the teacher is seen as central to the counseling function.

In one city with a large staff, counselors are each paid to work ten hours a week, although actual time in the program exceeds that limit by many hours. They are required to be certified with thirty graduate credits in guidance, but it is possible to meet this requirement after employment. Most come from the city school system with a counseling background, though a number hold full-time jobs with other agencies or training programs. One is assigned to a learning laboratory, the others deployed to decentralized school locations from which they cover a number of separate class sites. The counseling staff meets monthly. The guidance supervisor who acts as a coordinator, resource and liaison person, conducts individual and group conferences with the counselors, supervises in-service training, and makes contacts with agencies that can offer job placement or training opportunities to the ABE students.

In another city, part-time counselors, supervised by the central public school director of guidance and assigned to the day school system, make some time available to the ABE program. Although certified by the state, they are not required to have specific training in working with ABE students. Informed observers feel they reinforce a traditional academic emphasis of the ABE program at the expense of developing coping skills in students.

In one of the six cities studied, use of guidance counselors was found unsatisfactory because the counselors were unable to establish needed rapport with students. Although counselors are used during registration periods, all other counseling is left to the classroom teacher.

Decentralization of class sites requires the counselor based in one school to get around to a number of other class centers. Success of this arrangement is largely a function of counselor time available and maintaining effective communication between counselor, administrators and teachers in the various locations involved. The counselor's task is complicated by the variety of sites for which he is responsible. One covers four schools, each of which has a number of classes, a storefront classroom, and classes in a Catholic recreational center, a housing authority community center, and a poverty program building. This system leads to uneven coverage, with students in some locations having repeated contacts with the

counselor, while those in other sites are totally unaware that the program offers such services. One teacher interviewed in a program where counselors are not permitted to test students has avoided testing his class because he thought that this was the counselor's function; he had not been in contact with him at any time during the year. At an evening adult school in another city, a teacher reported that the counselor came to the school on Tuesdays and Thursdays, but students who attended class on other evenings might never see him. An ABE director commented:

> "People tend to want to see counselors when they want to see them, and if you have classes in three sites so that Monday he is one place, Tuesday he is somewhere else and Wednesday somewhere else, he is in one site only a third of the time . . . . There is nothing like telling someone on Tuesday, 'The counselor was here last night; wait until next Monday.' "

Counselors commonly attempt to visit each of their assigned locations at least every two weeks; time spent at a given site may depend on the number of classes there and the number of students who have indicated an interest in meeting with him. In some programs they try to meet with each student within a few weeks after he has begun attending classes to help him with any problems that have arisen and to ascertain whether he has been properly placed in class. Contacts with students are generally initiated by the teacher, either because the student wants to speak with a counselor or because the teacher needs help in dealing with a particular student's problem. After this initial contact, it is common for student and counselor to contact one another directly.

Counselors may screen students and place them in classes, test, do job placement, refer students to social service and health agencies, and counsel on a variety of educational, vocational and personal problems. Where there is a large counseling staff, they may also arrange for speakers from such agencies as the League of Women Voters, a bureau of consumer frauds, or the city housing authority. Regularly scheduled group counseling sessions open to all students have been emphasized in one demonstration project with good results reported. However, circumstances were radically different from those in the regular ABE program so that generalizing is precarious.

If a counselor is on site at the time of a new student's arrival, it is generally his responsibility to screen and possibly test the entering student in order to place him in the class closest to his achievement level. If the counselor is not available, placement is normally the responsibility of a supervisor or senior teacher. In

most instances a simple word test or reading test is devised. Use of standardized achievement tests is the exception. There is general recognition that complicated testing frightens the new student; those responsible for placement are thought sufficiently experienced to gauge the new student's level. One exception was a demonstration project that stressed the preparation of ABE students for coping with the larger society. Here a more rigorous initial testing procedure was used as a first step in making the ABE student "test-wise." Teachers everywhere complain about the heterogeneity of students within classes resulting from the common pattern of informal placement procedures.

Counselors sometimes ask students to estimate the grade in which they belong, and test only those who are uncertain. Teachers feel that students are poor judges of their own achievement level and often end up in the wrong classes. Students are sometimes placed in classes with the lowest enrollments, regardless of reading level.

It is not uncommon where counselors are few or strong emphasis is placed on students completing an elementary school equivalency examination for counselors to do little except administer tests, a function which could be largely done by aides. Elsewhere counselors are not permitted to test at all — this is reserved for teachers and supervisors — but are expected to help teachers interpret test results.

Helping students locate their place in the program both constructively and realistically is a major challenge to the counseling function. Some teachers argue that students should be told where they stand — that this is the only way to treat them as adults: "I hide nothing and keep nothing from them. I stress at the beginning that they should know what they are doing here and why." Others never tell students the grade level at which they are reading because this knowledge might be too discouraging for the student performing at a low level. The student is told, however, how many grade levels he has advanced over a given period of time.

Students are likely to consult counselors about educational or vocational problems, but rarely ask assistance with more personal difficulties. It is often the case that counselors are white and the ABE students black or members of other minority groups. This difference may limit communication between student and counselor. More often it is the teacher who develops a familiarity with the out-of-school life of the student.

Problems relating to health, jobs, housing and difficulties in dealing with government bureaucracies probably affect student dropout

rates more than inadequacies in the ABE program itself. Assistance is clearly needed to deal with at least those distracting social problems amenable to change. Some argue that the counselor should be involved as little as possible with academic concerns, but should help students solve other problems which inhibit efficient participation in the ABE class. Where counselor availability is limited, however, and teachers are better able to understand the students' out-of-school problems, there are obvious implications for greater teacher involvement in the counseling process.

Teachers do not have the time to familiarize themselves with the various social service and health resources in their students' communities. Perhaps the counselor's role could become one of resource trainer and backstopper for the classroom teacher, making it possible for the teacher to assume more effectively the counseling function.

Intensive counselor involvement in job placement is unusual. In some instances, however, counselors do contact potential employers. Rather than placing students directly in jobs, counselors tend to channel students to state employment services or to job training programs. Many ABE students are motivated to attend class to change their job status. This suggests the need to develop vocational counseling and job placement competencies in the ABE program, either through direct contacts with employers or through cultivated linkages with state or city job placement or training programs. The heavy reliance of ABE programs on word-of-mouth for recruitment of new students also argues for improving job placement programs. Word-of-mouth operates with special effectiveness when the prospective student learns of a basic education student who has gotten a new job as a result of his ABE experience. There is good likelihood that the addition of counselors for vocational advisement and placement would reduce ABE's dropout rate.

Teachers may be best equipped to deal with personal difficulties that plague ABE students, but job placement is probably best handled by the trained counselor who can develop useful employment and training contacts. The counselor, however, who is typically employed in ABE on a part-time basis is somewhat handicapped. He is already heavily loaded with diffuse responsibilities, and most job contacts must be made during the hours when counselors are occupied with day jobs. A restructuring of the counseling program to focus the counselor's limited time on those areas where he can be most productive is an option. The provision of a full-time vocational counselor would be ideal.

There is widespread disagreement among ABE practitioners as to the proper role of guidance personnel. Several problems emerge for further consideration — effective distribution of counselor time among decentralized classes, role of the counselor in the testing process, definition of benchmarks to help the student locate his place in the program, division of counseling responsibilities between counselors and teachers, and systems for assisting students who enroll in ABE in the hope of changing their job status.

As programs evolve, attention of planners will increasingly focus on what is happening to those who move out of ABE into the job market, into other training programs, and into the community. If the ABE game is to improve, it is essential that its impact be more closely assessed in terms of significant life gains. ABE can do a great deal more than merely provide instruction. It can help players parlay their winnings into a real payoff in their lives beyond the classroom.

Notes

1. National Advisory Council on Adult Education, *Annual Report* (Washington, D.C., 1974), p. 28.
2. James S. Coleman, et al., *Equality of Educational Opportunity* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1966), pp. 126-127. Figures reported are for all public school teachers, whereas our survey was confined to urban centers.
3. For a more detailed discussion of the problems of ESL, see Gordon G. Darkenwald, "Literacy Education for Non-English Speaking Adults in the United States," *Literacy Discussion*, 2 (1971).
4. The index of non-traditional emphasis was based on four subjects: health education, consumer education, ethnic or racial heritage, and coping skills (how to apply for a job, obtain legal assistance, deal with landlords). Teachers were asked to rate on a five-point scale the amount of emphasis they placed on each subject (see Teacher Survey, item 12, Appendix). For the four subjects in the index, the lowest possible score was 4; the highest, 20. Teachers in the low group scored 4-9, in the medium group 10-13, and in the high group 14-20.

Chapter 5

Paraprofessionals

Another house player found in many ABE games is the teacher's aide. Usually referred to as a paraprofessional, she may be paid or serve on a voluntary basis. But what she does has little direct relationship to whether she gets paid or not. The paraprofessionals differentiate into five familiar types: (1) careerists (teachers waiting to get into jobs or others looking for a stepping-stone to some form of higher education); (2) community representatives ("indigenous" to the local neighborhood and interested in part-time work near home); (3) transients (college interns, VISTA volunteers, and others working for a limited time period); (4) drifters (those uncertain of career objectives and buying time); and (5) retireds (former teachers and others who want to keep actively involved after retirement). Nationally, the ratio of aides to teachers is one to five.*

The job of the aide may include instruction, recruiting, attendance follow-up, administration, clerical work, housekeeping, and child care. To understand how and why aides are used in the classroom, it helps to determine the stage of development of the ABE program and to take a good look at three interrelated processes: recruitment/selection, "fit" with the teacher, and retention or separation from

*National Advisory Council on Adult Education, *Annual Report* (Washington, D.C.: 1974), p. 8.

the program. How these processes work and the way the aide is used will be substantially determined by teacher style, class characteristics, degree of job formalization, training, funding, student demands, and the needs of aides. This chapter looks at how these factors influence the aide's role.

Recruitment/selection and "fit" — establishment of a working relationship between aide and teacher — are reciprocal processes. The way aides are selected and the qualities for which they are screened have much to do with resulting "fit" in the classroom. Conversely, selection tends to be influenced by results of the fitting process. The degree to which recruitment and selection are modified to accommodate the fitting experience varies. In newer ABE programs early efforts at recruitment are often independent of this experience. As the program develops, recruitment tends to become formalized in terms of what has been learned about classroom fit. For newer programs recruitment/selection often determines how paraprofessionals will fit into a program. Older programs tend to have better teacher-aide fits in the classroom. But stage of program development is only one condition influencing the relationship of fitting to recruitment.

Teacher Style

A critical determinant in the use of aides and teacher-aide fit is the way the teacher organizes instruction, and his collateral functions of failure management and control of the class, areas in which the aide may provide work relief. The most important question is when, how, and to what degree classroom time is allocated to instructing the class as a whole, several smaller learning groups, or individuals. In the traditional and modal pattern of teaching the class as a whole, aides are seen as having limited utility. Rather than being used for instruction, they grade papers, maintain attendance records, follow up on absentees, and perform minor administrative, clerical, or housekeeping functions. When a teacher attends to the class as a whole but periodically gives individual attention to students, aides may be assigned an instructional role. Both teacher and aide commonly move among students to give special attention or tutoring to those who need it. In multi-class sites, where classes are differentiated into beginning, intermediate, and advanced levels so that participants may work at similar learning tasks, aides may be used less for teaching.

When the teacher places emphasis on individual tutoring or learning groups, such as dividing a class into groups according to achievement level, subject matter interest, or for skill practice, aides

are more likely to play an instructional role. Individualized and small group instruction is more common in BEd classes than in ESL. In general, the more heterogeneous the class, the more difficult it is to provide individualized instruction and the greater the pressure for help. When a class is grouped by achievement or ability, the most common pattern is for the teacher to take the middle-range group and assign special groups, either slower or more advanced, to his aide. Individual or small group styles of instruction overburden the teacher, and he needs an aide to share the overload. This factor, *relief*, possibilities for which are defined by teaching style, and that of *compatibility* are two critical dimensions of the fitting process.

Another variable in teacher style that determines how paraprofessionals are used is *pacing*. Inasmuch as the aide is primarily used when the teacher shifts from working with the class to small groups or individuals, the timing involved in moving from one to another is important. A teacher may organize instruction so as to move from class to sub-groups or individuals in one class period. Or he may alternate among these modes of instruction from period to period, teaching the whole class most of one period and spending most of the next with learning groups or individuals. Pacing accounts for aides sometimes sitting around marking time. They often have no way of knowing in advance when the teacher will shift to learning groups or individual instruction. How a teacher paces his teaching will determine to what degree he can be relieved by an aide sharing work, assuming an overload, or undertaking less valued work of a clerical or housekeeping nature.

Teacher style varies a great deal, and this goes a long way to account for how aides are used. It is a potent factor in teacher-aide fit and tells us something of the kind of recruitment and selection that will eventually emerge as the ABE program grows and the organization learns what teachers need and for what reason. There is also evidence that when more than one paraprofessional is assigned to the same classroom, teachers tend to adapt their style and organization of instruction to make use of them in small groups and with individual participants. Some teachers, especially if uncredentialed or inexperienced, can feel threatened by a more experienced or knowledgeable paraprofessional. Aides are then avoided or used in ways to reinforce the teacher's sense of security. Prior experience with aides is an important factor influencing aspects of teacher style relevant to use of aides.

Teachers often use aides to provide emotional support, especially to new students, and to establish and maintain student confidence.

Often the teacher just does not have the time to individualize his attention for personal matters important to students but removed from his instructional tasks. A paraprofessional recruited from the neighborhood within which a class is located often acts as a shill in attracting students who know and trust her.

Aside from whether classes are multi-level or differentiated by student achievement (as in more centralized programs that use fewer aides, and then largely for clerical or housekeeping services), degree of effective organization of instruction is usually decisive in the use of aides. It is one thing to say a teacher's style emphasizes small group instruction. It is another to suggest that his approach is organized to do this well. In some classrooms teachers organize instruction, with appropriate lesson plans, to make best use of aides from the first day of class to the last in small group and individual instruction. This requires skill in an area in which almost no adult teachers have been trained. Of course, when a teacher confines himself to traditional class instruction with an emphasis on drill, he has less need for elaborate organizational plans. Obviously, the greater the degree of division of labor, the greater the need for planning to fully and effectively use aides in the classroom.

How paraprofessionals are used in ABE is also influenced by whether or not the aide is inherited by the teacher. When a new teacher assumes responsibility for a class in which an aide has been working, the aide tends to be used in terms of her inherited role until the teacher decides his own needs are being inadequately met by this arrangement. An aide who has been following her own lesson plan in working with a group of slow students, for example, may then have to adjust to a different plan under the new teacher. The paraprofessional must adapt to the style of the teacher, the teacher to a set of established expectations of the aide's role on the part of both aide and students. Inherited aides present special problems of fit. Longevity in employment can mean that the aide is repeatedly inherited.

When attendance drops in a particular class, an aide may be used to follow up absentees or baby-sit when children of students impede regular attendance. Attendance variability can also dictate how she is used. Because newcomers may enroll anytime during the year, aides are often assigned to work with beginners while the teacher instructs the rest of the class. Absentees requiring make-up work are also influential in the use of aides.

Formalization

The degree to which the job has become formalized dictates the

freedom a teacher may exercise in using an aide. The less the aide's duties are formally prescribed, the more a teacher's style will determine the paraprofessional's role. Formalization of the aide position typically is established by teacher style, which, as we have seen, has to do with the division of labor resulting from the way instruction is organized.

Formalization may also be a function of the ABE program's ideology. In one Western city studied, program policy dictated that the teacher attend to his class as a whole, with emphasis on drill. The use of an aide was consequently unnecessary. Other programs articulate a policy of individualized instruction, making the use of aides as tutors essential. Some states or large cities establish limited job specifications for aides like recruiting or tutoring or attendance. Texas has separate job descriptions for instructional assistant, counselor's assistant, community relations coordinator, library and materials assistant, audiovisual assistant, clerical assistant, and child-care assistant. This practice can restrict flexible use of paraprofessionals in the classroom. One city has over thirty different types of aide, each with a limited job description. Another has a policy of using funds to expand the number of classes as much as possible; this means, in effect, no money for aides. Hence, stage of program growth may dictate whether paid paraprofessionals are used; they are more apt to be paid later, as the program develops. Organizational need may also dictate the use of paid aides; that is, a co-sponsor involving many participants and/or teachers with scheduling problems may get priority.

State or local government may be another source of formalizing the job of the paraprofessional, with laws or credentialing requirements that limit the use of aides as teachers or prescribe that paraprofessionals be residents of the local community served by an ABE class. Local candidates may prove to be unable to assume teaching chores, but able to effectively recruit students or take on administrative or clerical work. Some of these will be career oriented and aspire to work their way up in the teaching profession. What aides are used for dictates much of how they are recruited. In some cases they are used to recruit others like themselves from the local community.

The community can be a direct influence on formalization. In Los Angeles, community advisory boards review how the paraprofessional is being used, how effectively, and recommend changes. They can exercise considerable influence on local government and the school board. Boards take an active interest in the use of aides

in the schools, which provides both for continual reformalization of the aide position and a check to assure that use of locally recruited aides meets community expectations.

A fifth formalizing influence can be the paraprofessional herself. In cases where a teacher does not know exactly how to use an aide or allows her sufficient latitude to take the initiative in defining her job, this influence can be decisive. Even though the position is highly formalized in theory, what happens in the classroom will be largely determined by specific circumstances. Often aides just do not know what to do. They try a little clerical work, a little housekeeping, or they may just sit around most of the time waiting to be asked by the teacher to do something. Sometimes an aide has a particular area of strength, like math, and the teacher will let the aide instruct and wash the coffee cups himself.

Whether the paraprofessional is primarily a local community representative, careerist (such as a woman aspiring to climb the career ladder to become a teacher), or a retired person will make a difference. Each type of aide tends to formalize her particular position to fit her own image and objectives. Aides who are retired, some former teachers, often come just to keep busy. They gravitate toward the kinds of work they most enjoy doing as retired persons and formalize their positions around this kind of work. For example, they may want to run an office, keep attendance records, or do only tutorial work.

In a growing program, aides may collectively pressure the director to establish career opportunities, including provision for additional schooling. Conditions of employment may be formalized under a collectively negotiated contract in some larger cities where paraprofessionals are represented by a teachers' union or similar bargaining agent.

Somewhat less influential as a source of formalization are the ABE participants themselves. They may have demands to make of the paraprofessional that can, and do, outweigh other influences defining her role. For example, some in groups of slower or more advanced participants resist being taught only by the aide and will demand equal time from the teacher. Others prefer to be taught by a person closer to their age or by an aide for whom English is also a second language and whose pronunciation is easier to understand. Participants may demand individualized work with the aide, even though the teacher is strongly disposed to teaching the class as a whole. This can constitute decisive pressure on a teacher who lives under the tyranny of voluntary attendance. There is no game without the players, but in practice this player power is seldom

exercised. Sometimes a tightly coherent ethnic group will impose its will upon a teacher when the aide is from the same group and understands both its language and educational tradition while the teacher does not. This has happened, for example, in classes that contain a majority of Chinese-American students.

When a recruitment policy is directed at trying to bring in paraprofessionals of similar ethnicity to participants or of bringing in those most qualified according to traditional standards (that is retired teachers, students), this will contribute significantly to formalizing the aide position.

The position of paraprofessionals can be formalized in small but important ways. Certificates of achievement, formal application and screening procedures, written job descriptions, identification cards, the use of staff parking spaces, and other amenities reinforcing professional identity are highly valued, especially by often-neglected volunteers.

Conditions that frequently limit formalization include irregularity of funding, "tailor fitting" (selective recruitment and placement of aides to fit perceived needs of particular teachers) and administrative disorganization — classes opening and closing without close central control, poor record keeping, absence of current lists of aide candidates, and so on. These conditions can lead to greater flexibility in the use of aides, but also to reduced feasibility of pre- and in-service training and to less systematic screening of candidates.

The fitting process is enhanced by tailor fitting, by recruitment processes with highly selective procedures, that is, administrative formalization, and in the absence of administrative leadership of this kind, teacher formalization. Teachers formalize when given initiative to set their own aide recruitment procedures, determine the types of recruitment pools to tap, and decide the use to which the aide will be put. All these approaches have the effect of doing as many things as possible in advance to assure a good fit.

Some formalization of duties may be necessary to meet the requirements of various funding agencies through which aides may be secured. As programs get older there is a tendency to formalize. A moderate degree is probably desirable; too much is counterproductive and often involves a waste of time. Ideally, the paraprofessional should become a jack-of-all-trades. To complement the widely varying ways teachers function in the classroom and to provide them relief; successful paraprofessionals often become just that — which means teaching, clerical, or administrative work, housekeeping, recruiting, baby-sitting, or other jobs required by the

teacher from time to time. Flexibility appears to ensure the best "fit" between teacher and aide.

Training

Training can influence how paraprofessionals are used. Kind and amount of training required by aides depends upon teacher style, characteristics of the class, the aide's own background, and degree of formalization of the aide position. Type and level of training required, in turn, profoundly influence both recruitment and fitting processes.

Whether or not paraprofessionals require pre-service or in-service training may depend upon how they are supposed to be fitted into a relationship with the teacher and degree of flexibility required to play jack-of-all-trades. Training designed without sufficient regard for these considerations may render the paraprofessional incapable of achieving a compatible fit or of providing necessary relief to the teacher. For some teaching styles, on-the-job training by the teacher himself may be the only way to get a good fit; for others it may be seen as a waste of time by the teacher. In-service training or hiring pre-trained aides is often considered more efficient, especially when large numbers of aides are involved.

On-the-job discovery of strengths and shortcomings of the aide both in terms of work roles and compatibility is central to diagnosing training needs. The teacher is in a unique position to do this and to recommend whether he can be better relieved by the aide's attendance in a local in-service training program or by a specific type of on-the-job training. When removed from realities of specific interpersonal relationships of the classroom, training can undermine the teacher and produce a bad fit. Especially when teachers are themselves not recently or extensively trained in teaching adults, aides exposed to more advanced methods and techniques of teaching have become frustrated, creating a problem for the teacher by indicating lack of support for what he is doing or even communicating skepticism to participants. So notions about training "packages" may be dysfunctional when they separate aide and teacher. Many ABE directors are convinced of the logic of combined in-service training programs in which both teacher and aide practice different ways of working together and establish common role expectations. But such programs are rare indeed.

For similar reasons, the indiscriminate transfer of aides from teacher to teacher once a workable fit has been achieved does not work well. Chances of a successful fit seem enhanced when aides

are chosen by teachers who select them from among those eligible, with provision for a probationary trial period.

Teachers seldom systematically train aides. They define things the aide may do and indicate approval and disapproval of her performance in these areas. Areas of autonomy granted an aide are both a condition and indicator of effective fit. Teachers infrequently analyze their functions in the classroom into competencies that may be shared, or systematically diagnose strengths and weaknesses in aides in order to train them on the job. Few volunteers and fewer paid aides know other paraprofessionals within the ABE program. Hence they seldom learn from each other. A socializing subculture of peers does not exist in most programs. Earlier training of volunteers appears to have proven its value in ABE — often they have been trained as teachers or as Peace Corps volunteers in Laubach literacy methods.

Funding

The way paraprofessionals are used often depends upon who pays them. This can be the ABE program itself; the public school system, which can spare a few aides for ABE; a college paying students with academic credits for interning; VISTA; or some other program. Funding sources may set limits on the use of paraprofessionals, on the time they are available, the kinds of jobs they can do, or experiences they must be given. When positions have not been formalized, the director sometimes exercises complete freedom in using aides: "Once I get the money, I cheat and use them where they are needed." When one or another funding source is cut back, aides may suddenly be dropped from service in ABE classrooms.

Stage of program growth is often related to funding. A program may begin with use of volunteer teachers. The advent of Title III funds raises the priority given to hiring salaried teachers to expand the number of classes. Aides funded by other programs, the public school system, or a university are used when available, often as an interim measure. Later, paid paraprofessionals are added on a continuing basis with Title III funds.

State regulations that mandate that expensive fringe benefits comparable to those given to a permanent employee must be paid to aides after six months' service have resulted in paraprofessionals being fired and rehired to evade a budget crunch. Where fringe benefits are added at the time of the change of status of aides from temporary to permanent within a year or two, the problem is avoided. Where they do exist, such regulations discourage the development of a stable cadre of aides.

The unpaid status of volunteers who serve as paraprofessionals constitutes another influence on the use of aides. Specifically, volunteers cannot be given too many unrewarding jobs without the program losing them. Therefore, they have greater leverage in determining their duties. If they do not like the work, they may not show up again. Paid aides are expected to do some work they find less than gratifying simply because they are paid for their services. Because teaching is usually the most satisfying aspect of paraprofessional work in ABE, and because volunteers are often more skilled and better qualified, more of them teach in ABE classrooms than is the case for paid aides. When paid aides really do not need the money, they may similarly gain control over what they do because the money does not sufficiently compensate them for doing unwelcome jobs. When paid paraprofessionals are used in the same classrooms as volunteers, the paid aide tends to be used for non-instructional jobs, the volunteer to teach.

Participant Demands and Needs of the Aide

Demands of the participants and the paraprofessional's own needs can become important factors in formalizing the aide's position. Both also can determine how she is used even if the job does not eventually become formalized. The paraprofessional's own motivations, her stability in the area or potential mobility, her career outside of the ABE program (student, retired) all have to do with the role she will assume. The kind of satisfactions she needs out of her work as an aide — a kind of therapy, getting out of the house, helping her own people, being useful, gaining status, making money, making a contribution — will be factors influencing use. How the aide is recruited and fitted to the teacher will similarly influence use.

When a teacher is uncertain how to use a new aide, and the paraprofessional takes some initiative, what often happens is that the aide tries this or that, becomes a jack-of-all-trades, and adapts her role to that of the disorganized teacher.

In programs structured for the aide's upward mobility, individuals are moved from participant in the program, to volunteer, to paid aide, to teacher. Paid paraprofessionals can move into either non-credentialed or credentialed teaching posts in ABE or elsewhere in the public schools. For careerist aides, longevity in the program largely depends upon the existence of a graduated reward system promising upward mobility. A career ladder is a form of social control and that contributes to program stability.

Older participants may prefer working with an older person — either teacher or aide. A young woman teaching young men may find an older woman aide highly usable and a valuable ally in the classroom. Some older participants or cultural groups have traditional expectations of the way they should be taught and prefer lecturing to group or individual work. Others demand equal time from the teacher; they will not settle for spending most of their time with an aide. These demands do occur, although they rarely dictate aide use.

Paraprofessionals who join a teachers' union can collectively negotiate general conditions of their use. This may become an increasingly important influence on their roles in ABE.

Recruitment-Selection Processes

There are three main variables: recruitment pools, procedures, and processes. The recruitment pool to be tapped for aides is most important. It may be a social group, social status, or social aggregate. Ideologically, there is a widespread preference for hiring aides who are ethnically and culturally similar to ABE students. This viewpoint is shared by government, minority communities, and ethnic groups involved in the program, and to a lesser degree by ABE directors themselves. Such community representatives are thought to be valuable cultural mediators between participants and teachers. Their employment also contributes to the local community by creating jobs and entry into a system otherwise closed to those with limited educational backgrounds. In some urban systems a "career ladder" makes advancement possible from assistant, to associate, to full teaching aide. With additional education along the way, the aide may become a regular teacher in ABE or elsewhere in the schools. Not all aides from the community, however, are interested in upward mobility for career development. Some are "empty nest" housewives who want part-time work close to home; others are motivated to "help their people."

There are various recruitment pools for community representative-type aides. VISTA volunteers have been used to recruit them from local neighborhoods to come and help their brethren learn English. This is an extension of institutional recruitment, as distinct from the not uncommon form of self-recruitment that brings aide candidates forward to seek jobs for which they believe themselves qualified.

There are also recruitment pools for those not primarily community representatives: retired persons who want to keep busy, or

students training to be educators who need to intern as paraprofessionals; VISTA volunteers; or housewives who want to serve in socially significant ways as volunteers. These are some of the same people who volunteer to work in anti-poverty programs, in hospitals, or for Planned Parenthood or Red Cross. Some are also empty nest housewives who do not come from the local community. Some may have taught in the past.

Determinants of paraprofessional use which have been identified in this chapter indicate which kind of aide is likely to be recruited and in which recruitment pool to find her. If a teacher's style requires intense tutorial work, recruitment is likely to be directed to pools with people most highly qualified by education and relevant experience — students, retired people, or college-educated housewives — and less to pools of community representatives. Class or ethnic composition may dictate the recruitment of an aide able to work with a particular ethnic group or with participants who have least prior education — one who can best relate and communicate with "her own" people, that is to say, community representatives. Aide positions formalized as administrative and clerical, and funding sources that specify "community representative," will determine alternative recruitment pools. The very experience of using different recruitment pools has much to do with which pool will be used again. Often the ideological bias for hiring local "representatives" fails to produce a good fit. Teachers may conclude that locally recruited aides lack the skill or experience or assertiveness to be able to provide the relief that the teacher needs. An intensive effort to train local aides from scratch may be considered simply not worth the trouble.

Recruitment pools may be divided into those composed of aides generally similar to ABE students in ethnicity, language, cultural style, and socioenonomic circumstances — by and large local pools — and those in which aides are less similar in these respects. The more similar pools consist of community representatives, some of whom come from local churches or other grassroots community organizations. The less similar pools include student interns, VISTA volunteers, and some retired people and empty-nest housewives — by and large better educated people who will go anywhere in the city to be of service. At least one major city maintains separate lists to assure some balance in appointing community representatives and "those willing to drive twenty miles to get a job." Directors and teachers are more likely to turn to the local pools to find aides who are older — young peope often do not like to work with older students — and when potential longevity of service in a neighbor-

hood is seen as important. Whether an aide is needed for day or night work will call for use of different recruitment pools. Working people can be used in evening programs. Daytime classes use empty-nest mothers or retired people from the neighborhood or interns.

Institutions in the community that can organize pools of relatively well educated individuals in sufficient numbers to make up for the inherent unreliability and turnover among volunteers are of potential value to ABE. Colleges, universities, high school organizations like Future Teachers of America, and effectively organized volunteer bureaus are among them. ABE directors have at times been instrumental in influencing volunteer bureaus to establish criteria for screening candidates.

A major determinant of how paraprofessionals are used is the administrator's and supervisor's ideological bent with regard to the priority and value placed upon the role of the aide. This was put succinctly by one ABE director, who cites the "key advantage" of

> allowing paraprofessionals to be used as "bridge" people with adults from less advantaged neighborhoods who have various degrees of difficulty identifying and working with teachers who tend to have developed middle class attitudes and prejudices. In such situations the best teacher tends to be a little "suspect." Having an "interpreter" leads to better understanding of the students by the teacher and vice versa . . . .
>
> The issue should really be considered in much broader terms than what the paraprofessional is doing for the individual class and students. Just as important is . . . what the indigenous paraprofessional is doing for herself, her family, and all others she affects away from the classroom. In other words, indigenous aides would be hired for more reasons than just to help the *immediate* adult basic education class.

A dedicated director can aggressively recruit community representatives and place them in classrooms whether his teachers like it or not. Or the pressure for aides can be initiated by the teachers. In general, supervisors think of aides as marginal in their order of things. There is evidence that aides may often be used as teachers "on the cheap." This practice is less blatant in systems with career ladders for aides because their use becomes more formalized and prescribed.

Procedures of recruitment refer to how these pools are entered for the purposes of finding people. There is wide variation in practice from happenstance to highly elaborate screening processes. One pattern is for a teacher to meet somebody and invite him to come and serve as a volunteer. Or they may recruit students,

friends, or relatives of ABE students. Such informal recruiting seldom involves a commitment to longevity on the job, although many volunteers work for long periods with a particular teacher or in a particular classroom. Teachers may be permitted to request an aide, or an ABE director may actively encourage their use, either in specific cases or as a policy. Beyond the individual teacher recruiting volunteers through personal contact, there is usually some effort to screen candidates who wish to be unpaid aides. This is necessary particularly because those with severe emotional problems are often liabilities in a classroom situation. An argument is sometimes made for a kind of pre-service training which can orient aides to the philosophy and general posture of adult education and also serve to screen out those who lack commitment or suffer from serious emotional problems.

Aides are sometimes recruited through the mass media. A phone call to a night talk show in Berkeley netted thirty-one volunteers. Volunteers are often found by "instant recruitment," recruiting anybody in sight when the teacher sees a particular need for giving individualized help to a student who is falling behind. Such short term ad hoc arrangements sometimes become permanent.

By and large, recruiting paid and unpaid aides is not a problem of instituting an energetic search. The paraprofessional role in ABE is popular and appears to provide considerable satisfaction to those involved. In many cities there are waiting lists of candidates who seek out aide positions in ABE. The task is to screen and process them. Lists need constant updating. Many people indicate they are candidates when there are conditions attached to their availability, that is, they want to work or do not want to work during the summer months, or they are interested only in case they do not get other employment in the meantime. There is much tunover among candidates.

A critical organizational factor is the degree of autonomy extended to units of administration, schools, school districts, and classrooms in using aides. If directors or supervisors who wish to utilize paraprofessionals have the freedom to recruit and use them independently of other units within the larger program, this will influence how frequently aides are used and the priorities placed on their use.

Recruitment procedures for paid paraprofessionals are apt to be more formalized. The agency that funds the positions may itself set requirements for hiring in terms of seniority, territoriality, experience, level of education, and so on. There may be a further set of procedures for screening such as interviews, probationary

periods, and teacher reports. All this is done to make sure that the best possible return is yielded by money invested in salaries.

The use to which an aide is to be put is itself a condition formalizing the position. Purpose is intimately related to what recruitment pool to go to and what procedure to follow in order to effect entry. It makes a major difference whether you are looking for someone for clerical work, housekeeping, student recruitment, or tutoring. Purpose or use tells you what kind of recruitment pool, how stringent the screening procedures must be, and what kind of training is most appropriate. It becomes increasingly feasible to predict the most appropriate recruitment pools, selection procedures, and functions of the aide by understanding the determinants of how the paraprofessional is used in the classroom.

"Fitting" Procedures

Except for specifications in government or school regulations pertaining to the use of aides, there is little concern within the ABE program over aide-student fit. This aspect of fit does not always work well in practice, but it is not seen by those involved in ABE as a major problem. The main concern is how well the paraprofessional fits into the teacher's scheme of things. Compatibility and relief have been identified as the principal variables in this relationship. For the teacher whose style is almost exclusively one of teaching his class as a whole, the ideal relationship with an aide may be none at all. When such a teacher acquires an aide, the aide often finds too little to do that is rewarding and leaves. Aside from this extreme, properties of compatibility emerge in the working relationship.

One of these has to do with degree of autonomy. Often the teacher delegates an area of responsibility to the aide within which the paraprofessional is left alone except when the teacher needs help. This kind of mutual autonomy is most common in effective aide-teacher relationships. When the relationship is a dependent one, it can only be the aide who is more dependent or the autonomy of the teacher will be undermined, incompatibility will result, and the aide will probably be forced to leave.

Another dimension is one of relative rank. There is a much greater probability of incompatibility when the aide is more advanced than the teacher on the social or educational scale. This occurs in the case of some volunteers. In a few cases the teacher may not have a teaching credential, but the aide or volunteer may be a retired teacher who does. The teacher must maintain her authority both in rank and autonomy to produce a good fit.

The same goes for teaching style. Unless areas of teaching autonomy have been clearly defined, the teaching style of the teacher must be the predominant one. Of course, most paraprofessionals defer to the teaching style of the teacher. This is important inasmuch as the degree to which the aide can relieve the teacher is a function of the paraprofessional assuming an integral part in the work of the teacher. Most aides look upon the teacher as someone who can teach them as they are learning to work with students; the deference implied in this relationship plays a large role in effecting compatibility.

When a paraprofessional speaks the predominant language in an ESL class and the teacher does not, there is a higher probability of friction between them. It may not have a great deal to do with either the way the aide is used or personality. Perhaps because the aide is closer to students in language, ethnicity and life style, she is able to penetrate more quickly their perspectives and identify needs, problems, and expectations. Possession of this valuable information places the aide in a distinctive position. Acquisition of this knowledge and limited initial social distance from students rather naturally foster feelings of mutual identification. There is a possibility that the aide may come to speak for the students, her people, as an advocate rather than mediator. Given the status differential between the aide and teacher, there is obvious potential for trouble, especially if things are not going well in the classroom, or if either teacher or aide feels insecure in her relationship. Assertive minority community representatives dealing with a white middle-class teacher are particularly likely to find themselves engaged as adversaries. If ethnic chauvinism or militancy is a factor among students, a crisis situation can be generated. But this seldom happens.

Whether or not the aide has the opportunity or desire to advance to a better job also influences her role. When upward mobility is not feasible, she can become inclined to build a commitment to the job itself and an ideology predicated upon the closeness of her relationship to students and sensitivity to their point of view. If a satisfactory fit is achieved with the teacher, she may stay in the program longer than other aides.

Personality conflicts based upon temperament, predilections, differences in pacing, or whatever, account for many problems of aide-teacher incompatibility. Again, the result is usually that the paraprofessional leaves the program. Another property of compatibility is relative abilities of the aide and the teacher. Some teachers just cannot work with an aide who has limited ability even though it is sufficient to do the job. Others appear to prefer and work bet-

ter with aides of limited ability. Ability of the paraprofessional is discovered on the job over a period of time. Teachers say, "I've worked with this aide and she just doesn't have the ability to do what I want her to do," or "I've worked with this aide and her ability to do what I want her to do is just perfect. I'm glad she's not any better because I couldn't stand it if she started doing better things."

The second dimension of fit, relief of the teacher's work load, sometimes boils down to a question of "I'd rather do it myself instead of depending upon her because she's not that reliable." Paid paraprofessionals are usually seen as more reliable and are preferred by teachers for this reason. The more reliable a paraprofessional is in relieving the teacher, the more work of a responsible nature she will be given, and the more relief the teacher enjoys.

When aides attempt to relieve the teacher by engaging in clerical, administrative, housekeeping, child-care, recruiting and teaching jobs, they are actually helping in five different ways. These underlying dimensions of relief include: (1) handling the work overload (teaching, clerical, housekeeping, etc.); (2) doing distasteful work (the things a particular teacher dislikes doing — for example, grading papers or taking attendance); (3) doing low-valued work (making coffee, cleaning up after participants leave, erasing the board, other housekeeping chores); (4) sharing the work (reducing the usual work load of the teacher); (5) counseling or rescuing (counseling participants with personal problems, serving as buffer when there is poor teacher-student fit as in the case of personality conflict or when the teacher is weak in some content area in which the aide has special ability, and mediating the teacher's ethnic, language, sex, or age differences with participants).

It is easy to see why an aide who is a jack-of-all-trades is highly valued. By providing relief to the teacher in all five dimensions, the greatest degree of compatibility is likely to result. Compatibility is intimately related to these generic dimensions, much more so than to the functions of teaching, doing clerical work, recruiting, housekeeping, and child care. While it is evident that teachers who individualize instruction especially need paraprofessionals, real relief comes not in helping teach but in helping with distasteful work, the overload, and rescuing both teacher and participants from certain kinds of binds in the classroom. Whether the aide teaches, controls, encourages, or feeds participants coffee does not matter nearly so much. The other side of the coin is that the teacher cannot afford to overload a good paraprofessional who is successful in providing work relief. A good fit involving both compatibility and

relief results when the teacher is unburdened, but without overburdening the aide.

The greatest success in fitting the aide to teacher is found in smaller programs in which the director recruits aides for personalities and areas of competence that specifically complement a particular teacher. This is "tailor fitting," a process not feasible in larger urban programs in which the relationship between teacher and director is remote and sometimes impersonal. Where it works the director knows intimately what his teachers are doing in the classroom and has insight into how personality affects differences in teaching style. There are cases in which a director provides aides to a teacher thought to need help. When the teacher resists using the aide for teaching, the director may force the issue by formalizing the aide's position as a teaching assistant. Tailor fitting can border on a kind of paternalism on the part of the director, which can produce teacher resistance.

Volunteers' performance depends upon amount and regularity of time devoted to work in the classroom, prior training as a teacher, teacher willingness and ability to instruct and supervise, volunteer disposition to accept the teacher's authority, knowledge of students' native language, and "warmth" in relating to students. For paid paraprofessionals the element of career commitment is crucial, whether they are merely "passing through" or girding for the long haul, which predisposes them to adapt to organizational expectations.

Retention-Separation Processes

Longevity for an aide is a function of fit. If she is unhappy enough about her job, she will probably just fail to show up any more or repeatedly call in sick and fade out of the picture. Occasionally this does not occur, for example, when the paraprofessional is a student intern or VISTA volunteer. The teacher may then have to get rid of her.

When initiative for separation is taken by the teacher of the ABE class there are several alternative mechanisms used. In extreme and serious cases, involving a theft or unquestionably disruptive behavior, outright dismissal may be necessary. In one such case the aide could not be persuaded to stop shouting at slower participants. A more common approach is not to re-employ a paraprofessional when the class term ends, a class is discontinued or the teacher is transferred to another class. Later problems are often circumvented by making it clear that an aide's services are simply no longer required.

A third and interim mechanism is to transfer the aide to another class to try for a better fit with a different teacher. This is often used as a holding action until the class term ends, and the aide is not re-employed. A typical case is an aide's inability to work with participants of other ethnic or nationality backgrounds or when there is a personality clash with a teacher. Another tactic is to make the paraprofessional's situation unbearable, to force her to leave. This often involves overloading her with work and imposing an oppressive degree of supervision. Sometimes another aide is brought in and assigned the most important duties. Still another mechanism is to get another authority to intervene to remove an aide, the community advisory committee to request her services be terminated, for example, or the public schools to transfer her to an elementary classroom.

But getting rid of human beings often gets sticky. One encounters an aide known to be weak, unable to handle learning groups, and able to relate only to two or three of her favorite participants. But her husband who taught in the program had a heart attack, and her aide salary is the family's sole income. So she is suffered, though not gladly. The ABE program is not a machine. How it works depends upon the interaction of people in a wide variety of often unique situations. In some cities paid aides are protected by annual contracts, which impose further constraints.

Volunteer bureaus and church groups tend to be good sources of volunteers; fewer recruited from these sources are terminated for such commonly cited reasons as "snideness with participants," "lack of feeling," "unreliability," "Christian overzeal," and "attempts to do case work out of school, mixing into private lives of participants." When a particular recruitment process or pool works once, it will be used again. When it fails, it is seen as discredited.

Retaining mechanisms to encourage an aide to stay in the program include assignment of increasing responsibility, the promise of stability of employment in the sense that as long as the program lasts the aide may stay, and the promise of a career. In some programs this can mean moving from volunteer to paid paraprofessional status; in others, a series of steps leading to becoming a teacher. The career ladder may be highly formalized, with graduated classifications such as assistant, associate, and teaching aide. Such an arrangement is not widespread in urban ABE programs, but has advantages as a retaining mechanism. The provision of incremental rewards, recognition, and rank provides a screening mechanism and encourages the better paraprofessionals to stay in the program.

Longevity of an aide is influenced, too, by unexpected cutbacks in funds, a class closing because of inadequate attendance, or centralizing a previously decentralized program. Outside factors sometimes also intervene. Student interns will complete the single class term of work required by their academic institution. VISTA volunteers will recruit local aides to replace them as recruiters. Aides coming from a church or other community organization may see their assignment only in terms of working with ABE students from their own ethnic group.

It is a fair working hypothesis to assume that good paraprofessionals tend to stay a long time and poorer ones tend to be separated from the program fairly quickly. Most programs do provide adequate opportunities for aide longevity. Provision for this is an important, implicit obligation in initiating an aide program. Paraprofessionals leave ABE for programs with more attractive career opportunities, such as aide jobs that provide for part-time attendance in educational programs. For careerists such competitive opportunities are most compelling, less so for community representatives or transients.

Aides need a great deal of teacher reassurance, especially in the beginning of their work. Particularly for some community representatives, their life history of limited success in both jobs and school often breeds insecurity and a conditioned resignation to seek relief in defeat.

> The aide said it was best if she would be prepared to quit her job. The teacher was surprised and asked her what she meant. She replied that there had been a lot of criticism of her teaching (by other teachers). The teacher laughed and said reassuringly, of course she should not quit. "Complaints from teachers are things that you expect and have to live with and that ends the conversation."

Generally speaking, if an aide is an asset to the program, she will be encouraged to stay. The intelligent director will profit from a beneficial teacher-aide fit by returning to the same recruitment pool for future selection of paraprofessionals.

Chapter 6

Directors

A grifter is variously defined as a carnival concessionaire who operates a wheel of chance or as a sharper who gulls unsuspecting bumpkins. It is in the more benign sense that we take a look at the ABE director — or coordinator, principal, or supervisor as he is variously called — as an operator. He sets up the game, finds the location, hires the dealers, brings in the players, supervises the action, keeps a sharp eye on the take, and copes with the authorities and other outsiders as required. Emerson once described an institution as the lengthened shadow of one man. If this holds for ABE, the local director is the man. When he is good, chances are you will find his program interesting; when he is bad, you will be bored.

Most directors do not devote full time to running ABE programs. In urban centers with populations over 200,000 about half are full time, compared with about one-fourth in the smaller cities. Most part-time ABE directors have full-time responsibility for the school system's total adult education program, which includes not only ABE but adult high school and general adult education offerings. Nearly a third are in charge of vocational education as well, including such programs as WIN (Work Incentive) and MDTA (Manpower Training). In smaller school systems without full-time adult education personnel, a teacher or counselor — or even someone not regularly employed by the schools — may be hired on a part-time

basis to administer ABE. Where the director is in full-time charge of ABE he almost always reports to the administrator responsible for all adult education activities operated by the school system. This top administrator usually has the title of director of adult education; a few of the largest systems have assistant superintendents for adult education and related activities.

Most ABE directors, like other school administrators, are white, middle class, and male. Only one in five is a woman. Women, however, account for more than a third of the full-time directors, probably because men tend to be employed in the higher-status position of director of adult education, and in this study are classified as part-time ABE directors.

As a group, directors of adult education or assistant superintendents who devote only part of their time to ABE are considerably older than the full-time ABE directors. Approximately half of the first group are fifty years or older, compared with less than one-fourth of the full-time operators. Even more striking are modal differences in age. The modal age category for full-time directors is thirty-five to thirty-nine years of age (26 percent); for their part-time counterparts it is sixty to sixty-five (also 26 percent).

Operators tend to get into the ABE game fortuitously. Some have taken graduate courses in adult education, but very few hold advanced degrees in this field. The typical director of adult education (not the *full-time* ABE director) has come up slowly through the ranks of the public school hierarchy. Many have backgrounds in vocational education. A large proportion were assistant principals or guidance counselors, often with part-time teaching or supervisory experience in adult education, before becoming directors of adult education.

Many of the full-time ABE directors have had somewhat different careers. About half were previously employed as secondary or elementary school teachers. Most of this group moonlighted in ABE. The backgrounds of many others reflect specialized training and positions in fields more relevant to ABE, for example, special education teacher, remedial education coordinator, learning lab specialist, reading supervisor, and community-school coordinator. A few held positions as supervisors or coordinators of vocationally oriented federal programs such as Neighborhood Youth Corps and MDTA.

People become directors of adult education or directors of ABE for a variety of reasons: the challenge and social significance of the job, higher status, more pay, and as a stepping-stone to higher administrative positions. A few of the older ones have obviously been put to pasture, but the majority are energetic and dedicated

administrators. Most have experience in adult education or other educational specializations especially relevant to the challenges of educating functionally illiterate adults. Although typical of school administrators in many respects, they appear generally somewhat more flexible, more sensitive to the individual learner, and more responsive to community needs. The risks and ambiguities of ABE hold little appeal for the stereotypical educational bureaucrat.

Sizing Up the Game

Each operator has his own version of the game. Most see it as having three related payoffs for the players: increased competency in basic educational skills, the eighth grade and eventually the high school diploma, and a better chance at a decent job. So the payoff is learning, certification, and employability. The most problematic outcome from the director's perspective is learning. There is little consensus among directors on what should be learned. Many, of course, stress the traditional three R's. To the traditionalist, ABE is simply an elementary school equivalency program. This means language and math skills and perhaps a little geography, civics, and science. To the traditionalist, reading and other language skills are preeminently important. In the opinion of one such director, "all good things come from reading." A minority of directors, on the other hand, are committed to a more inclusive view of adult education. They emphasize the application of basic skills to the immediate life problems of the urban poor. Consumer and health education, local government, and coping skills that enable the poor to deal with the system are ranked as an important part of their curricula. "Increased ability to cope with the problems of urban life" and "enhanced self-confidence" are often cited as major educational objectives. However, we have seen that these concerns are infrequently observed in practice.

Related to views of what the game is all about are attitudes concerning who should play, or at least who the operators should make a pitch for. The official "target population" consists of all adults over sixteen with less than the equivalent of eighth grade educational skills. In most cities this number is astronomical, accounting for a third or more of the adult population. Faced with an abundance of potential clients, there is little incentive for directors to make special efforts to reach the poorest, least literate, or most alienated. Whoever shows up can get in. The doors are always open, and all comers are welcome. Most directors agree with their colleague who asserted that "emblazoned on every school that is working on an ABE program should be the big word 'availability.'"

If availability is the catchword, there are still those who are troubled that many who need ABE most are not being reached through the open-door approach. Only 13 percent of the directors surveyed strongly agreed with the statement that "ABE has had substantial success in reaching the chronically unemployed or underemployed males commonly labeled 'hard-core.' ". Many feel a moral obligation, and sometimes pressure from community groups and state education officials, to reach more young dropouts, more unemployed males, and, in some cities, more blacks. But there is a widespread belief that ABE lacks the resources to do this. Operators often feel that a coordinated delivery system, including health, housing, job training, and other social services in addition to ABE, is needed if the hardest to reach are to be served.

Directors typically believe that by and large they are reaching that segment of the undereducated population that ABE is best able to serve. In the case of the hard-core unemployed, eight out of ten directors surveyed felt that this group is best served not by ABE but by vocational training programs with a basic education component.

The "creaming" effect of the maximizing service approach is sometimes vehemently defended. The director of one large program insisted that limited funds should be spent where they will do the most good, namely on those individuals who are the most highly motivated, the most middle class in outlook, and the most likely to succeed. In his view the situation is analogous to that facing a medical team in the case of war or natural disaster: you concentrate your efforts on those most likely to survive, not on the hopeless ones. Despite the disaster analogy, this director makes a special effort to reach the poor black population, particularly younger males, because, as he put it, "whites without a high school diploma do better than blacks with one." He could easily follow the common path of minimal resistance and fill his classes with middle-aged women and the foreign-born. Despite the problems of working with the more recalcitrant segments of the urban poor, many directors resist the temptation to take the easy way out. As one said: "I could double my program by moving ten blocks. I have known that for years. I would also lighten it up considerably."

There are interesting variations related to age and employment status of directors when it comes to the policy issue of who should be served. Directors were asked to rate extent of agreement with the statement posed in Table 6-1.

As Table 6-1 shows, full-time ABE directors are more likely to agree that scarce resources should be used to reach the harder-to-

Table 6-1
Directors' Response: "Limited ABE resources should be used to assist those who are most disadvantaged even if this means reducing the total served," by Employment Status and Age*

	Employment Status				Age					
	Full-time		Part-time		Under 39		40-49		50+	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Agree	(19)	46	(15)	27	(12)	44	(8)	28	(12)	32
Uncertain	(10)	24	(10)	18	(8)	30	(8)	28	(3)	8
Disagree	(12)	29	(31)	55	(7)	26	(13)	45	(23)	61
Totals	(41)	99	(56)	100	(27)	100	(29)	101	(38)	101

reach even at the cost of reaching others. Younger directors are less likely to disagree with the statement but often express uncertainty. Significantly, directors who are full-time are generally younger. The part-timers are usually older men employed full time as system-wide directors of adult education. Employment status is a more potent predictor of opinions regarding who should be served than is age. Interestingly, directors over fifty are much surer of where they stand on this pivotal policy issue. In this group of thirty-eight directors, only three expressed uncertainty. Evidence suggests, then, that directors who are more totally involved in ABE differ from their older part-time counterparts on the issue of who should be served. Many full-time ABE administrators are not satisfied with "skimming the cream."

The perspectives of directors regarding what the game is about and who should play are influenced by an accounting system which purports to gauge program effectiveness. Directors are keenly aware of the significance of numbers — the numbers enrolled, the number who drop out, the number who complete eighth grade, the number placed in jobs or job training, and the number who show learning gains on standardized tests. Measures of these success criteria,

*Percent columns may not add to 100 due to rounding. Differences in response by employment status and age are statistically significant. For employment status, chi square = 7.8, df = 2, $p < .05$; for age, chi square = 10.1, df = 4, $p < .05$.

except perhaps the last, are relatively easy to obtain. It is much more difficult to quantify other outcomes, such as enhanced self-confidence, fuller participation in community life, greater independence and self-reliance, or improved school performance of participants' children. In short, the nature of the accounting system puts great pressure on directors to reach the most accessible rather than serve the harder-to-reach. It also promotes emphasis on the three R's instead of curricular areas less amenable to standardized achievement testing and less directly related to eighth grade or high school equivalency preparation. The directors surveyed rated total enrollment, dropout rate, and number completing eighth grade as their most important criteria in judging the success of their programs. Learning gains measured by standardized achievement tests and number of participants placed in jobs or job training were considered somewhat less important.

One criterion, success in recruiting hard-core, chronically unemployed persons, was associated with differences in director characteristics. Sixty-five percent of full-time as opposed to 43 percent of part-time directors rated success in recruiting the hard-core unemployed as an important criterion in judging the effectiveness of their programs. The greater significance of this criterion for full-time directors is undoubtedly related to the fact that a high proportion of this group favor a policy of reaching the hardest-to-reach. Age was not significantly related to attitudes on the importance of this criterion. Again, employment status emerges as the most significant variable in accounting for differences in these attitudes and opinions.

The pattern of instruction also reflects an ideological perspective of the director. Most educators fall somewhere on a scale between poles that may be labeled interactionist and behaviorist. The director with an interactionist orientation sees the quality of personal relationships within a learning situation as pivotal. The often unrecognized assumption is that a learner assigns meaning to a new idea and changes his behavior accordingly as a function of the way others with whom he is involved act toward him concerning the idea, how he anticipates they will do so, and how he interprets this to fit his particular situation. Thus emphasis is on the purposeful interaction among learners and between the learner and instructor. The instructor must strive to create a supportive ethos within the learning situation so that learners will be encouraged to try out new ideas and behaviors with accurate feedback on provisional tries, but without the penalties for making a mistake encountered in other life situations. Good teachers have personal qualities that

facilitate this learning process and work hard to know their students and understand them. Development of positive self-concepts is considered equally important for improving cognitive skills.

Teaching is viewed as an art by directors who favor the interactionist orientation. The teacher should be prepared with a highly flexible repertoire of instructional sequences adapted to where the instructional group and individuals are in terms of readiness, experience, ability, interest, and sophistication. Although patterns of learning interaction may be anticipated, specifics depend upon the uniqueness of interaction with the individuals involved. Hence the sequencing of instruction largely depends upon teachers' improvisations suited to learning opportunities as they arise in the process of classroom interplay.

Directors with a behavioristic posture place primary emphasis upon the direct relationship between the learner and instructional content, whether this is knowledge or a skill to be learned. Instruction is seen as a production process in which the product is knowledge, skills, and understanding. It is sequenced in a detailed and in some sense programmed prearrangement of things to be learned in an order dictated by experience with learners of similar characteristics. The steps toward a specific learning goal are specified in detail. The instructor is centrally concerned with controlling instructional effects. The key to individualized instruction is helping the learner know explicitly where he is, where he has been, and where he is going. The test of effectiveness lies in the learner's demonstrated performance, what he can do after he has had instruction.

Typical of this orientation is the director who said, "I don't care whether the students like me or my teachers as long as they can fill out the job application or pass the civil service test." On second thought, he allowed that he did care what the students thought of him, but he would not let that "stand in the way of their learning." As for participants developing self-concepts: "you teach them how to do something well — read, for instance — and they *will* think well of themselves." And as far as seizing opportunities for instruction as they occur: "We must become expert in making those opportunities occur, and you do it by anticipating what sort of things can happen, try to figure out what makes them happen, and then plan your instruction accordingly."

Few directors defend either of these ideological positions dogmatically, but differences in emphasis account in many cases for the nature of the instructional program, particularly the degree to which

aided self-instruction is stressed, as well as how learning laboratories are used, if they are used at all.

Another general perspective among directors which makes a difference in what does and does not happen in the program is the degree to which they feel free to operate within the network of their administrative relationships, especially those with the state department of education. You can tell a good deal about the kind of game he operates when an operator says, "The state lays down the guidelines, and we have to follow them or our next year's budget will be cut" or when he tells you, "You realize all administrators have to play the numbers game, so you play the numbers game, and that buys you freedom to do your job as you feel you have to."

Sizing Up the Teachers

Although directors differ on program goals and philosophy, they display a remarkable degree of consensus on the characteristics that make for good ABE teachers. Most say they look for teachers with warmth, concern, and the ability to relate well to undereducated adults. Even more than elsewhere in the schools, aloof, rigid, and authoritarian types are avoided. In addition to the familiar "warm and accepting personality" — the paramount consideration in hiring — most directors look for experience in the teaching of reading and basic math. Consequently, elementary school teachers and particularly reading specialists and special education teachers are usually preferred. Most directors also make an effort to recruit minority group teachers, although few are convinced that the race or ethnicity of the teacher is a highly important factor in teaching success. Some directors prefer male teachers on the theory that men are more acceptable to minority group male participants. Others seriously contend that attractive young women are more successful in keeping male participants in their classes.

Data on the relative importance of various criteria used for hiring ABE teachers were obtained from the director survey. Personality and commitment to ABE goals were deemed "very important" factors by over four-fifths of directors responding to the questionnaire. Previous experience teaching adults was designated very important by almost half and "somewhat important" by most of the rest. Well over half the directors saw course work in adult education, elementary education experience, and racial or ethnic background as somewhat important.

It is clear that, in the decision to hire a teacher, intangible qualities such as commitment to program goals and personality far outweigh factors that are more easily determined. Because the payoff

comes from attracting and keeping players in the game, it is not surprising that directors see personality and commitment as by far the most salient factors in evaluating their potential teachers.

Often, the director relies on his own supervisory staff and teachers to identify new talent possessing the personal qualities needed in the ABE classroom. Most supervisors, teachers, and other part-time ABE staff are regularly employed in the public schools. In the course of their other work they are able to identify teachers who are effective, personable, and likely to be proficient teachers of adults. The director, too, usually has friends in the school system who periodically recommend promising teachers. Particularly in small to medium-sized programs, teachers are typically recruited informally through the web of friendships and contacts that the director and his staff maintain within the school system. Since there are almost always more prospective candidates than jobs available, the director can afford to be selective.

There are, of course, constraints (and occasionally they are severe) on the director's freedom in selecting staff. Most directors are required to work through the school system personnel office in hiring teachers. If the ABE program is small, he usually takes responsibility for both recruitment and selection, and the personnel office simply processes the appointment. In many larger cities, however, where ABE employs seventy-five, one hundred, or even two hundred teachers, and turnover is relatively high, the personnel office necessarily plays a more active role in teacher recruitment and selection. Generally, the director or members of his staff work cooperatively with the central personnel unit, and as a rule the director can veto any applicants whom he judges to be unsatisfactory. In a few large cities, however, the entire recruitment and selection process is handled by the central personnel office and the director is stuck with their choices. But the general situation is that described by a director who reported: "I have to go through the personnel office, but I can get the personnel office to sanction the choices I have made." More than eight out of ten directors surveyed claimed that they enjoyed great freedom in selecting teachers.*

*In adult education the director usually has the authority to hire teachers. Clark noted that adult administrators have been given this special prerogative "because the informality of the selection procedure permits the principals to choose teachers who will be attractive to the different student groups and to reject applicants who do not appear to fit the adult-class environment. A centralized, impersonal system would not permit this type of discretion." Burton R. Clark, *Adult Education in Transition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), p. 87.

There are important differences in personnel procedures and policies for full- and part-time staff. In many cities union contracts or school policy require the director to give priority to school system employees in hiring part-time teachers. Only when there are no qualified applicants within the system is he free to recruit elsewhere. Such constraints can have negative consequences for the program, especially if the director is looking for teachers with particular characteristics or qualifications uncommon among teachers in his own school system.

In selecting full-time teachers, the director has more latitude. At least one full-time teacher is employed in two out of three programs in cities of over 100,000. Usually the proportion of full-time teachers is small. But in a few smaller cities, most notably those that rely heavily on day classes and learning laboratory instruction, the majority of teachers are full-time. Directors are often ambivalent about hiring full-time teachers when this is an option. On the positive side, full-time staff lend stability to a program, and full-time teachers may also be more committed to adult education. Moreover, they have time to prepare lessons and to get to know their students, and they do not come to class exhausted after a full day's work. On the other hand, full-time teachers cost more if they are employed on a regular contract that includes benefits and annual salary increments. If they are paid an hourly wage, and this is the practice in more than half the cities that employ full-time teachers, morale suffers and turnover may be higher. Moreover, if the performance of full-time teachers is unsatisfactory, it is usually difficult for the director to remove them; if they are protected by tenure, dismissal is virtually impossible. Nonetheless, nearly half of the directors surveyed expressed strong agreement with the statement that the greater the proportion of full-time teachers, the better the ABE program. About one in five strongly disagreed, and the remainder were uncertain. In the largest cities (over 400,000), only one director in four strongly favored full-time teachers. These happen to be the cities where the proportion of full-time teachers is the smallest.

The director is concerned not only with recruiting and hiring teachers, but with supervising and evaluating them once they begin teaching. He also plays a major role in organizing pre- and in-service education programs geared to the special requirements of teaching illiterate adults. The evaluation of teaching performance, except in cases of gross incompetence, is a difficult matter since there is no conclusive evidence that one teaching style is inherently better

than any other. The problem was cogently expressed by the director of ABE in a large Eastern city:

> "Individual teachers have their own style. And I don't know if we are going over our bounds when we say that a good teacher must do this and that. What works for one teacher may very well not work for another teacher. As a case in point, I had one teacher who was quiet. You could hardly hear her say anything. We tried to encourage her to spend more time expressing herself because we thought that that was a need in her case. But at the same time the people in her class kept coming back. So you can't say that that doesn't work."

The viewpoint that what matters most is not what teachers do but what happens to attendance as a result of what they do is widely shared. If attendance drops off in a particular class at a disproportionately high rate, this is taken as *prima facie* evidence of poor teaching.* The old saying that the customer is always right has a good deal of currency in adult education. Not surprisingly, directors say: "If you get more than one complaint about a teacher, then you should give him more than just a cursory look."

Although student satisfaction, or at least the absence of complaints or a precipitous drop in attendance, is the major criterion used in evaluating teacher performance, some effort is usually made to observe teacher behavior in the classroom. Directors look to see if a teacher is prepared, if he can organize instruction effectively, and if he is responsive to individual needs. The last of these is the sacred cow of ABE. Every director gives at least lip service to the necessity of "individualizing instruction." In the eyes of most directors, the worst thing a teacher can do (except in ESL classrooms) is to organize instruction in the traditional class drill mode. But as we have seen, despite this doctrine of individualized instruction, the heresy of traditional elementary school teaching practice is widespread. A few sophisticated directors also watch for what they consider phony individualization, where students work individually but on identical material. As one administrator put it: "It is not individual teaching when everyone does the same thing. The only difference is they don't do it at the same time. So I have to keep preaching and preaching."

In all but the smallest programs, the director delegates much of the day-to-day responsibility for instructional supervision to part-

*Burton R. Clark also observed that in other adult education programs "failure in solving the enrollment problem constitutes failure in the teaching role" (*Adult Education in Transition*, p. 89).

time teachers-in-charge, adult school principals, and instructional supervisors. In a few larger programs, and in decentralized programs with classes in numerous sites, the director necessarily relies on supervisory staff to see that things run smoothly.

A major responsibility of supervisory staff in most cities is in-service training of teachers. Eight out of ten directors reported that they require their teachers to take pre- or in-service training, usually in the form of periodic workshops. In some cases coursework in adult education will satisfy the requirement. Another form of staff development is supervisory coaching. The supervisor-coach assists individual teachers who have specific problems or needs. Beginning teachers may also be asked to observe in the classroom of a more experienced teacher.

In-service training can be an administrative headache for the director. Teachers are often reluctant to participate unless they are paid to do so or given released time. Some programs get around this problem by making pre-service training a condition for employment. But most directors believe that pre-service courses or workshops are not enough, that continuing in-service education is badly needed. The general practice of compensating teachers to participate in training activities, however, limits most in-service training efforts to one or two brief workshops each year. Sometimes there is no money to do even this much.

Sizing Up the System

One aspect of the director's job involves dealing with teachers, supervisors, and other staff on matters related to the instructional program and staff development. He must also work with numerous individuals in various units of the school system. Moreover, if ABE is to thrive, important linkages with welfare, employment and other agencies, as well as co-sponsors and various community groups, must be established and nurtured. This in itself can be a full-time job. So there are three sets of critical relationships: those that involve (1) his own staff, (2) officials in other parts of the school system, and (3) persons associated with organizations and agencies external to the school system.

Within the school system, the director deals mostly with staff in business, personnel, and other central units and with building principals. Contact with administrative superiors is usually infrequent, except when a full-time ABE director reports to the director of adult education or other official with operational responsibility for the total adult education program. The director's relative independence and freedom from close supervision by administrative superiors is

due mainly to the marginal status of adult education in the public schools. In a child- and youth-centered educational system, adult education is a peripheral activity of little interest to most high-level officials in the school bureaucracy. ABE's relative autonomy can be a liability, however, since the support of high-ranking school officials and the board of education is important to the continued viability of the program. Most directors, consequently, make an effort to enhance the visibility of ABE within the system and to gain the support of the superintendent of schools and the board. It is sometimes felt that the board of education is more positively disposed toward ABE than is the central school administration. As one director explained, "The members of the board reflect the community's interest in adult education." Board members with a minority group constituency are often particularly supportive.

The director's dealings with officials in the central school bureaucracy and with building principals tend to be on a personal and informal basis. Routine school policies and procedures are seldom applicable to ABE because of its semi-autonomous and marginal status. For example, if the director needs the services of a school psychologist to administer vocational aptitude tests to adult students he will have to make a special arrangement with the director of guidance or pupil personnel. If he wishes to design a beginning reading curriculum for adults, it may be necessary to seek the cooperation of the assistant superintendent for instruction. Since most ABE teachers are paid on an hourly basis, a special arrangement with the business office may be required in order to process salary checks. As previously mentioned, the hiring of ABE teachers is seldom routinely handled by the personnel office; it is largely the responsibility of the director. The cooperation of building principals and even custodians is usually essential, since ABE seldom has its own facilities. Principals typically have absolute authority over their buildings during the day, and sometimes in the evening as well. Consequently, as an operator, the ABE director must work out some sort of modus vivendi in order to secure space for classes to meet.

The director must work out a great many arrangements in an informal, ad hoc way with various officials in the school system. And the process is a continuing one, since policies, people, and circumstances are always changing. In his relationships with school system personnel outside his own unit, the ABE director is in a dependent position. He must rely heavily on personal contacts, persuasion, and tenuous arrangements in order to keep his program going. Of the directors surveyed, only 16 percent indicated that they relied little

on informally negotiated arrangements and contacts with key school system personnel.

Sizing Up the Contacts

The director's relationships with organizations and agencies outside the school system are also characterized by ad hoc arrangements and informal maneuvering. The continued functioning of the program requires the director to maintain communication with state and sometimes federal education officials, to work with key personnel in local agencies that refer students and provide services, and to initiate and sustain relationships with such co-sponsors as churches, community groups, and employers.

General policy guidelines are formulated in Washington and mediated by state education departments. Since the level of local funding and basic guidelines for his program are controlled by the state, the state ABE director and his staff can play an important part in the life of the local director. In some states the regional program officer of the Office of Education is also an important figure, but these officials have little direct control over local programs. Their major influence is usually with the state directors.

The Office of Education requires that each state have a state plan for ABE that defines the general terms under which the program is administered. The state plans vary in their comprehensiveness, but most indicate program priorities, such as reaching adults with less than five years of schooling; specify the general parameters of program operation, for example, number of class hours per week; and provide detailed prescriptions for budgeting and reporting. Many of the ground rules of the game are formulated at the state level.

The rules promulgated by the state, however, are generally subject to negotiation or evasion. If the local director has a good working relationship with his state counterpart, he has fewer problems. Of course, much depends on the type of man in the state education department. A few are political appointees with no professional interest or competence in adult education. As one local director put it:

> "We are fortunate that the state director is a good man, and he understands that if you are doing the right work you get the money whether or not you have the bodies. But if he left and a body-counter came in, I would be out of luck."

In some states the state director and his staff are a source of professional expertise that local directors draw on. State staff specialists assist the local director in developing in-service training

programs for teachers, help in the selection or design of curricular materials, and provide other specialized services. In one large city, the local director turned to the state staff to provide leadership in setting up a special summer program that was made possible by a last-minute allocation of funds. State staff were instrumental in organizing the project. They provided planning funds, arranged meetings with community groups, and took the initiative in staff training and curriculum development.

Close working relationships with the state director or his staff such as those described above are more the exception than the rule. Not surprisingly, close cooperation is much more evident when the ABE program is located in or near the state capital. In some cases, the state director is perceived as a petty bureaucrat who is insensitive to the needs and problems of local programs. And in a few states he is viewed as a major obstacle to the development of effective local programs. Even when relations are good, the local director sometimes finds it necessary to evade state regulations. In a discussion of state-mandated minimum program hours, a local director commented:

> "You are supposed to get two hundred hours per year. You are supposed to not have less than eight hours per week. If I obeyed all those regulations, I would not have anybody in class."

The Money Game

In the ABE game most of the activities that produce the payoff cost money. Administrators spend much time budgeting and trying to find and productively allocate additional money. In practice, financial and educational decisions are closely connected, and it is sometimes difficult for an outsider to figure out whether the decision not to launch a program innovation, to rely on self-contained classroom patterns of instruction instead of a learning center approach, or to have the classroom teacher conduct the entire program in contrast to a more diversified staffing pattern is due to lack of educational value or lack of funds. A relatively concise and accurate overview of the total ABE program can be obtained from a review of the financial records, which can reveal sources of money and the strings that are attached to it, as well as indicate how much emphasis is placed on staff development, use of commercial materials, and program evaluation. An important organizational factor in ABE is deciding who will take part in these financial decisions, the process they will use in doing so, and the criteria for satisfactory decisions.

A complex pattern of financial procedures connects the local ABE program to federal, state, and local government, and sometimes to local organizations as well. This is partly related to the way in which the current ABE program was organized, which typically occurred in the mid-1960's with the onset of major federal funding. Almost half of the largest cities in the country used the federal funds to establish ABE classes for the first time. Slightly fewer used the new money to expand their existing programs. In most of the remaining cities, separate federally funded ABE programs were established to parallel locally funded ones. The amount of federal funds that are distributed each year depends on the total amount provided in the federal appropriations bill, which is usually enacted during the year in which the expenditures are to occur. Although a continuing resolution by Congress at the start of the fiscal year provides for expenditures at the same monthly rate as the previous year until a new appropriations level is established, there is some budgetary uncertainty for the local ABE director that can disrupt program development. For many directors this is a critical problem. In a few cities, this uncertainty has been minimized by the allocation of local funds as a cushion, to be used only if the anticipated federal funds are not forthcoming according to schedule.

The state ABE director and his staff allocate federal funds to local school districts on the basis of a state plan which he amends each year and submits to the U.S. Office of Education. In most states the local share of the state allocation is relatively predictable and routine from year to year, but in a few states the local school district must make a case for requested funds. Six out of ten programs receive little state or local tax funds, while federal support runs about 90 percent. For programs that enjoy state or local support, the federal share ranges down to as little as 10 percent. Programs with the highest proportion of federal funds tend to be the newer ones and to have full-time ABE directors. The local share from state sources has been expanding in recent years in some programs. Typically the ABE administrator handles most of the financial transactions at the unit level by working closely with the school business office.

Although the rules can be bent or even broken occasionally, the local director cannot afford to alienate the man in the state capital who holds the purse strings. In only a handful of cities does the local school board provide as much as a third of ABE's operating budget. Federal money, allocated to the cities by the state ABE director, pays most of the bills. The local director needs

federal money if his program is to continue to function, but he also needs students and some degree of community support. Consequently, directors often spend much of their time dealing with agencies that refer students or provide services to students and with organizations and community groups that co-sponsor classes.

Perhaps more than any other educational program in the public schools, ABE depends on the cooperation of outside organizations and groups in order to survive. Nine out of ten directors expressed strong agreement with the statement that cooperation with other agencies and organizations in the community is essential to the success of ABE. But for most directors, particularly in the larger cities, coordination with organizations that make or receive referrals of ABE students is tenuous. The director must make a concerted and continuing effort to maintain communication and cooperation with welfare, employment, and other key agencies. Almost all of the directors surveyed reported that they make or receive referrals with employment and welfare organizations, and about two-thirds indicated a similar relationship with manpower training and community action (CAP) agencies.

Directors also spend a great deal of time and energy initiating and sustaining co-sponsorship arrangements with employers and various community organizations. Generally, the co-sponsor recruits members or employees for one or more classes and provides space for instruction. ABE supplies the teachers and instructional materials. From the director's viewpoint, co-sponsorship arrangements have several important advantages. One obvious advantage is that co-sponsoring organizations are a source of additional students and additional classroom space. Co-sponsorship, moreover, can enable the director to reach segments of the target population that would otherwise not participate in ABE. Furthermore, and not least important, such arrangements increase ABE's visibility in the community and provide a potentially potent organizational constituency to voice support in times of crisis.*

Many potential co-sponsors, particularly Model Cities, manpower training, and community action agencies are also potential competitors for adult basic education students and other resources. Although more than half of the directors surveyed reported little

*As Burton Clark observed, "Co-sponsorship is public relations where it counts, functioning to neutralize hostile groups and to cement support for adult education" (*Adult Education in Transition*, p. 117).

or no competition from other ABE programs, in some cities competition is severe and poses an immediate threat with which the director must deal. Particularly in smaller cities, most directors try hard to cooperate with or to co-opt potential or actual competitors. Few ABE programs have more students than they can handle. In his dealings with referral agencies, co-sponsors, and competitors, the director's basic objective is to ensure a sufficient input of illiterate adults to keep ABE in business.

Sizing Up Personal Chances

Marginal status in the school system, a noncaptive student clientele, and part-time faculty, borrowed facilities, and reliance on uncertain federal funding are some of the factors that make administering ABE a uniquely frustrating as well as challenging job. But many directors who relish the challenge and are deeply committed to adult education confront a difficult dilemma. The career opportunities open to them in adult education are limited. As one full-time director explained:

> "I have had several offers from elementary schools and junior highs that I have turned down because I like this work, but typically if the coordinator is looking for money his next step is out of adult education."

In terms of salary and status, the position of the full-time ABE director is generally comparable to that of an assistant principal. More than two-thirds of the full-time directors surveyed reported that their salaries were roughly equivalent to those of assistant principals or other middle-level school supervisors. Fewer than a third reported salaries equal to that of a school principal. Salaries in the principal to assistant superintendent range were reported by most of the part-time ABE directors, the majority of whom are regularly employed as directors of adult education or the equivalent.

About half of the full-time directors surveyed indicated that their next promotion within the school system would probably be to director of adult education or adult school principal. But for the other half, promotion would lead to a variety of middle-level positions outside the field of adult education. A third of the administrators who devote part time to ABE, largely the directors of adult education, reported promotion to a school principalship or assistant superintendency as the most likely next step. One in five did not repond to the question and several wrote on the questionnaire that there was no opportunity for promotion. The fact that one-fourth of these administrators are sixty or older may explain the high

nonresponse rate to this question. For many of them, the directorship of adult education is a terminal career position.

Adult education has not yet established itself as a professional specialization in the public schools. The general absence of special training requirements and separate certification for adult education teachers and administrators is one index of the profession's marginality in the schools.[1] By and large, administrative positions in ABE and adult education in general are perceived as stepping-stones to higher-status positions outside the field of adult education. The full-time ABE director usually has only one additional career step in adult education — to director of the total adult education program. But few will wait for that one position to open up when there are a variety of attractive alternatives within the school bureaucracy. Likewise, the full-time director of adult education has gone about as far as he can to within his own system. Other professionals, including superintendents, customarily advance their careers by horizontal movement from small systems to larger ones that offer greater professional responsibility and higher salaries. This is sometimes an option for adult educators, but a research study of directors in Illinois found that three-fourths had never even considered it.[2]

If the game continues to enjoy federal bankrolling, as it appears it will, the growing professionalization of the field and a nascent public recognition of education as a life-long process augur well for expansion of opportunities for career adult educators. Meanwhile, for the operators the risks of the game are more than offset by the payoffs.

Notes

1. Yet the professionalism of the ABE director was found in a recent study to be the single most important factor in accounting for program innovativeness. The measure of professionalism combined the following variables in a single index: amount of time devoted to adult education, amount of formal training in the field of adult education, degree of activity in adult education professional associations, and commitment to adult education as a career. See Gordon G. Darkenwald, et al., *Problems of Dissemination and Use of Innovations in Adult Basic Education* (New York: Center for Adult Education, Columbia University, 1974), Chapt. 4.
2. William S. Griffith, et al., *Public School Adult Education in Northern Illinois*, Circular Series A-192 (Springfield, Ill.: Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1966), p. 47.

Chapter 7

Hustling The Community

Contacts are important for any big-time gambler. To operate an established game he has to have continuing access to the high rollers, a safe, attractive place to play, and influential contacts to provide support and protection. For ABE this means linking up with a variety of specific organizations, community groups, and target populations. Through them the operator recruits the players, space, and support without which he is out of business. His style in hustling the community will depend on its size and composition, past experience of adult education in the schools, and his own professional orientation.

It makes a difference whether you are talking about New York or Fort Wayne; sheer size dictates greater formality and bureaucratic constraints. In cities with a history of heavy in-migration of Europeans or Asians, experience with programs still called "Americanization" often colored the way in which ABE was conceived. For most, Americanization was substantially an extension of primary and secondary education and became institutionalized as such within the structure of the public schools. Administrators, teachers, and materials were borrowed from elsewhere within the public school system. Even where curricular materials were adapted to adult students, this was done by personnel from elementary or secondary education.

When ABE funds became available, the common response was simply to expand the same type of program with the same kinds of administrators and teachers and involvements with employers as before. The longer the tradition of the adult education program, the greater the likelihood that the organization of ABE and its staff will be found to be cut from the traditional public school mold. There are notable exceptions, of course.

In other cities in which adult education had not been so developed and so institutionalized within the public school bureaucracy, a different pattern sometimes emerged. These were urban centers that missed the heavy European migrations in the first quarter of this century but received a large influx of Southern blacks, Puerto Ricans, Appalachians, and others since the 1940's. A consequence of the poverty programs of the Kennedy and Johnson eras was to redefine the educational needs of the disadvantaged beyond literacy and marketable skills to encompass also the need for a positive self-image, identity, and know-how for coping with the real world and for participation in the political process. Thus, in communities in which the first programs of adult education were introduced as a result of federal initiatives in the 1950's and 1960's, there was less pull from the schools to simply extend past arrangements and more pull from Washington to develop a different orientation.

A second important precedent pertained in cities like Saint Louis and Fort Wayne, which in recent decades had made a deliberate effort to redefine their public schools as a community school system.

This concept established as a major obligation the service of community needs, not only those of the elementary and secondary school-age population. Resources of the schools were used to actively serve adults, their community groups and organizations.

The way ABE directors function in the community is also a function of their professional orientation, experience, and training. Full-time directors tend to do more. Those who see themselves as adult educators rather than public school administrators, social workers, or something else tend to become involved in a professional network with an ethos that places heavy emphasis on innovative and entrepreneurial program development. A sociologist (Joan Gordon) analyzing field data from six cities characterizes this kind of operator:

> The professional adult educators in [these two cities] are "entrepreneurs" in the sense that they make things happen, they create the demand for ABE where they think there is a need. They do this

through personal contact with agency heads, personnel directors of industry, correction officers, etc. Note, for example, that the director in [one city] has established contact with key people in various parts of the social structure — key people not in the sense of their prestige or authority but key in the sense that they are at places in the social structure where they can feed those in need of ABE into the program or can facilitate the operation of the program. For example, he knows the secretary in the local high school who is in charge of the tests for the GED exam, and she refers those who fail the test to him. Through his membership on various community boards he met the personnel directors of International Harvester and General Electric and raised the question of how many of their employees were not high school graduates as a preliminary to co-sponsoring a program. (To their amazement, they discovered that fully 25 percent of their employees did not have high school diplomas.) Finally, he makes an effort to know the janitors in the buildings where ABE classes are held and has a cordial beer and pizza relationship with them.

Directors who come to ABE with a strong school-teaching orientation often introduce a learning laboratory as their earliest innovative development — in effect, an extension of the classroom. Those with stronger experience in community development, an emphasis for four decades among adult educators, generally turn to decentralized sites, broadly based advisory boards, and involvement with community groups and organizations.

Co-Sponsorship

Except in large cities and a few others where ABE has acquired its own facility within which to operate an adult learning center, the program is dependent upon other agencies for space. Principal among these is the public school, with which the ABE program negotiates the part-time use of classrooms.

Other co-sponsors can be the source of students, space, community support, and other services important to ABE. There are three major groups of potential collaborators. One is a number of poverty-related and often job training-oriented government programs like Work Incentive (WIN), Neighborhood Youth Corps (NYC), VISTA, Concentrated Employment Program (CEP), Model Cities, and MDT.*

*The Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) of 1974 eliminated most of the targeted Department of Labor programs such as MDT, CEP and NYC. CETA provides local governments more flexibility in using federal manpower funds for job-related education and training. Although the acronyms may change, ABE will continue to co-sponsor classes with the new manpower programs developed under CETA.

These "mandated" co-sponsors contract with ABE to arrange basic education instruction for their clients or trainees. They are federally funded programs administered through various state and local agencies like welfare and employment. The Office of Education encourages ABE to cooperate with these and other anti-poverty programs, hence the term "mandated."

WIN, a Department of Labor program, negotiates with the school system to provide ABE instruction for its clients, who are welfare recipients and receive a modest stipend while attending ABE. Participants may either be incorporated into existing ABE classes or separate WIN classes may be organized. NYC and MDT occasionally contract for ABE to provide instruction for their trainees, usually on their own premises. Model Cities contracts for classes and sometimes learning centers or armchair instruction in the homes of participants. Community Action Programs (CAP) also contract with ABE for instruction, but often CAP and MDT operate their own ABE programs independently and sometimes in competition with Title III. Custodial institutions such as prisons and mental hospitals are quite commonly co-sponsors with ABE.

A second group of co-sponsors are employers and, less frequently, unions. For the most part they agree to provide the students, space, and sometimes materials; ABE supplies the instructor. Hospitals, businesses and industries, banks, and nursing homes are frequent co-sponsors. Three-fourths of the directors in our national survey operated co-sponsored classes designed to upgrade employee skills.

A third group are grass-roots neighborhood organizations like churches, recreation centers, ethnic and poverty organizations, public housing developments, or self-help groups. They also agree to recruit and maintain the students and space, while ABE provides the teacher and materials.

Our national survey discovered 869 co-sponsored classes in 100 cities. Well over half were with community organizations, a third with employers (only 18 percent with businesses), and a little over one-sixth with manpower training agencies. Forty percent of the total were with churches and non-CAP community organizations; about 16 percent were CAP co-sponsored.

Over a third of the cities reported separate CAP-sponsored ABE programs. A slightly smaller proportion reported separate church-sponsored programs. In about a quarter of the cities separate ABE programs were sponsored by one or more of the following: businesses, non-CAP community organizations, and community colleges. However, few directors said they felt there was great

competition between these programs and their own for participants.

Almost all directors make or receive referrals with welfare and employment agencies, well over two-thirds with CAP agencies, and a slightly smaller proportion with manpower-training agencies and with non-CAP organizations. Nearly half the urban directors indicated that a majority of their ABE participants are recruited by co-sponsoring groups — a surprising report for most observers. Almost all agree that cooperation with other community agencies is essential to the success of their programs.

In long-established programs that have become well institutionalized within a traditional school system, the pattern of providing instruction in non-school sites and relating to co-sponsors is often routinized. These programs respond to initiatives by the government programs and employers — programs with established bureaucratic structures comparable to their own. The newer programs, especially those in smaller cities with entrepreneurial directors, sometimes have greater flexibility to innovate and cope with the more difficult organizational and maintenance requirements of co-sponsoring with local community organizations.

Directors handle most co-sponsor negotiations themselves. Middle-class directors deal by and large with established agencies and organizations. It is usually when a director delegates responsibility to a community liaison staff with good contacts in local neighborhoods that grass-roots organizations get involved.

The director's contacts are pivotal. About half report having an active ABE advisory committee. Sitting on community boards, getting to know personnel officers, ministers, and agency administrators are informal contacts that result in co-sponsorship. Persuasion is seldom involved so much as are cursory contacts to identify potential interest. When a potential co-sponsor is ready, the arrangements get made. Time is a big factor. When the director himself must make the contacts, negotiate, and provide continuing supervision of co-sponsored classes, there is only so much he can do. It takes less time and work to respond to initiatives from interested organizations than to actively solicit joint ventures.

Patterns of co-sponsorship vary. Detroit, one of the larger cities that places heavy emphasis on "outreach" classes, in 1970 conducted classes in ninety-six locations, about 40 percent in public schools, 20 percent in churches, and several each in community recreation centers, nursing and convalescence homes, housing projects, detention facilities, union halls, and parochial schools; and others were scattered in hospitals, schools for the handicapped,

an Urban League facility, a vocational training facility, and elsewhere.

Chicago in the same year had a decentralized program of Americanization classes (a misnomer — it involved all varieties of adult education) located primarily in non-school sites, an ABE program for welfare recipients located primarily in schools, and an "Inplant" program. The latter conducted two dozen co-sponsored classes, three-fifths of which were held on the premises of businesses, the rest divided between hospitals and other governmental agencies.

At the same time Saint Louis held classes in twenty-nine sites, about a fourth in community schools and the rest distributed among community organizations, churches, homes for older adults, technical schools, parochial schools, a prison, the YWCA, an office, bank, hospital, and a day learning center. Nashville had forty co-sponsored classes, ten with businesses, seven with manpower training agencies, and ten with community organizations, four of which were CAP-sponsored.

Smaller cities seldom have more than a dozen or so co-sponsored classes operating at any one time. In 1970, Hartford had eleven in churches, hospitals, businesses, community organizations, and manpower training agencies. Providence had fourteen, of which seven were in churches and three in hospitals.

Our national survey revealed that over half the urban directors hold 80 to 90 percent of their ABE classes in school facilities, but 43 percent hold a majority of ABE classes in such non-school facilities as churches, storefronts, and community centers. An even larger proportion want more such classes.

Different deals are worked out. The co-sponsor usually puts up the students and space and will sometimes provide books and materials, audiovisual aids, and occasionally counseling services. In other cases, ABE furnishes the instructional materials and may even pay community organizations a nominal rent for the use of space. When the program is centralized in one or a few ABE learning centers, the co-sponsored classes may be held in these sites; then the co-sponsor only provides the students. Co-sponsored classes are often closed to participants other than those designated by the co-sponsor, who agrees to maintain a minimum enrollment.

In a great majority of cases, it is the co-sponsor who initiates the contact with the ABE director, but there are various ways ABE makes its services known. In some cities community liaison personnel visit potential co-sponsors and attempt to sell the program. In others co-sponsors hear of ABE through its advertising efforts, which may

include radio and television, posters, flyers, or direct mailing. Often the director capitalizes on his own contacts to identify potential collaborators and interest them in his program. Satisfied co-sponsors and participants in such programs frequently refer others to ABE.

Except for formal agreements negotiated with "mandated" co-sponsors such as WIN, arrangements are relatively simple and involve no special budgeting by either partner. There is usually only an informal understanding between the director or someone he appoints and a representative of the co-sponsoring organization. Some directors make a practice of involving the instructor who will conduct the class early in these discussions. After a class is established, the teacher often functions as the continuing liaison person between ABE and the co-sponsor, working out problems as they arise and referring those beyond his capability to the director. Although most co-sponsored classes are identical to others in content, methods, and materials, in some cases the teacher will work with the co-sponsor to adapt the curriculum to fit his special requirements and to make minor administrative arrangements pertaining to the class.

In nearly every case the selection and hiring of the instructor is the sole responsibility of the director. He often makes an effort to find instructors with special qualifications to fit a co-sponsor's need, such as someone with experience in special education to work with handicapped participants in a class co-sponsored by Goodwill Industries or a teacher with an ESL background when employees are having special problems with the American idiom. If the co-sponsor feels the instructor is not working out well, he reports this to the director, who is usually responsive and willing to make a replacement. Such feedback from outside the program is given special weight.

Advantages of co-sponsorship for the ABE program are substantial. In Albany, where there is an adult learning center in which most classes are located, space is reserved for staff of cooperating and co-sponsoring agencies. This has proven invaluable to facilitate and coordinate counseling, referral, recruitment, training, and placement. Most ABE students in Albany are recruited through referrals and are stipended during training by the co-sponsoring agency. As most of the co-sponsors are concerned directly with getting their clients or trainees into the job market, the ABE program in that city is geared to this goal. Few ABE programs have developed such integrated relationships, but many do have close working relationships with the mandated co-sponsors, especially WIN, Model Cities, and CAP.

The Neighborhood Youth Corps has many high school dropouts and OIC (Opportunities Industrialization Center) and CEP are job-oriented programs that build on the skills learned through ABE. The advantage of holding classes in buildings rented by these groups is a de-emphasis on the school atmosphere. Many participants in these programs are young people seriously alienated from the formal school system. There is often less tension, more informality, and less social distance between participants and instructors. Often these programs involve some of the participants who are hardest to reach for ABE, so that mandated co-sponsors are often highly valued by the ABE director.

Other advantages of co-sponsorship for ABE, in addition to providing a useful approach for reaching a specific target group, are cost reduction and provision of support services, useful feed-back on the program, and important community support. Powerful co-sponsors can and do function as allies when ABE is threatened. In one New England city, when the mayor's office threatened to cut out the local matching share of ABE's budget, the move was thwarted and cuts restored when the director marshaled community supporters, teachers, and students to attend budget hearings.

Disadvantages include the administrative time involved in making initial contacts, negotiating, and conforming to special curricular or staff requirements. However, other than routine arrangements are necessary in less than a quarter of such relationships. There can be a goal displacement effect when ABE finds itself allocating resources to serve a population different from what its priorities dictate. In general, co-sponsorship is well worth the trouble.

Problems arising from collaboration with the mandated co-sponsors have to do with their extra demands for record keeping and reporting; variations in funding cycles, so that money becomes available at times that do not coincide with the budget cycle of the ABE program; limitations on the number of hours of training permitted; and job placement without regard for the students' involvement in ABE. These mandated programs constitute an important segment of ABE inasmuch as they often involve one of the hardest-to-reach segments of ABE's target population, young men who could not attend without a stipend.

Community groups that co-sponsor frequently have problems of recruitment and attendance maintenance inasmuch as stipends, released time, and other such potent external incentives do not pertain. There is often a question here, as with employers, of whether the target population is in line with ABE priorities. For example, church co-sponsors often recruit women as participants for whom

job orientation may be relatively unimportant. This kind of student may or may not be in line with priorities set for ABE resource allocation — a somewhat academic distinction inasmuch as few ABE programs carefully differentiate among target populations.

There have been demands for more community control over ABE classes by assertive local groups. This usually means selecting and supervising the instructors, and demands for more counseling services. Sometimes directors have shut their eyes to such practices as letting a certified ABE teacher sub-contract with a locally acceptable but uncredentialed instructor to take over classes.

For employers, co-sponsorship with ABE can be invaluable. In seaboard cities where many relatively unskilled workers do not speak English, communications problems between plant supervisors and workers have serious ramifications. Safety regulations cannot be explained with confidence. Job specifications become distorted in translation. Hospital regulations pertaining to isolation procedures and sterilization techniques go unheeded simply from lack of comprehension. So severe is this problem that some hospitals make ABE attendance a requirement for continued employment. In one city a public utility found another value in ABE: public relations. It contracted for ABE classes located within a ghetto area and widely advertised that its employees would serve as volunteers in the program.

Benefits to social service organizations relate to their program needs. Goodwill Industries often employ handicapped workers who lack much formal education, in part because of limited physical mobility. ABE can meet this special need. A drug rehabilitation center stressing emotional development in therapy with addicts saw in ABE an avenue for developing a sense of personal worth in its patients. Benefits are sometimes unexpected. One community health project, for example, reported marked reduction in employee turnover and increased morale among staff participating in ABE classes.

For neighborhood organizations and community development groups, co-sponsorship with ABE is sometimes seen as an integral element of a movement to foster greater community control in public decision making, ethnic identity, self-confidence and skills to deal with the Establishment, parent education, indigenous group development, and popular participation in the political process. Some are ephemeral, temporary groups, like those organized by a newly arrived nun in a poor Puerto Rican neighborhood in response to a strong need for English language instruction. Community organizations often have limited facilities, and can organize and

sustain an ABE class only with luck. They themselves are chronically threatened by recurrent budget crises as grants run out, by factionalism, and by instability of leadership.

Churches are somewhat less beset with these problems and are frequent co-sponsors with ABE. In many cases, however, they represent a somewhat different subculture within ABE's target population than do other types of community organizations. The point here is that doing business with community groups requires a high degree of flexibility on the part of the ABE program and often more effort to arrange and maintain the relationship. There is also a higher risk of failure. Most smaller programs have few such linkages, in part because of the special attention each small organization requires.

For the most part community organizations are involved as partners in ABE only when the director delegates the liaison function to aides who have access and acceptance in target neighborhoods. Sometimes it is the ABE instructor who recruits a co-sponsor from within his own community and maintains liaison for the ABE program. But in most large and traditionally administered programs the director seldom takes the initiative in establishing co-sponsorship with grass-roots organizations. Many ABE executives find it more congenial to respond to overtures from other agency and business executives. The corporate merger image comes more naturally than "going native" and entails fewer headaches. It also appears to be helpful in dealing with large and prestigious co-sponsors for the ABE director to have a visible and significant position in the formal school hierarchy.

Co-sponsorship can involve compelling incentives for students. One of the most powerful is a stipend offered by several of the government agencies or released time from work to attend classes. Some employers pay overtime, in some cases one hour of wages for two hours of attendance in ABE. Without provision for released time, students often find they cannot afford to spend wage-earning hours in classes. In an experience repeated many times, classes are set up on this basis and fold, only to be reconstituted with near perfect attendance when the co-sponsoring company agrees to a released-time arrangement.

Another important incentive for students is a payoff in recognition. Programs receive a boost when, as in one large industrial concern, the personnel manager frequently visited ABE students in the plant to inquire how they were doing in class and to give encouragement to continue. Another large employer published an article about a co-sponsored class with pictures of students. Elaborate

graduation ceremonies can have great value, especially when company officials and the ABE director attend.

Promise of employee advancement upon successfully completing an ABE program is seldom explicit, but the relationship becomes abundantly clear when graduates are singled out for promotion, a not uncommon development. ABE does make possible the acquisition of skills essential for many higher-level supervisorial jobs. There are many success stories of ABE students moving from the production line to acquire a high school equivalency diploma and some college and then securing a managerial position; of hospital workers qualifying as licensed practical nurses, and students eventually becoming talented teachers. It is often the more highly motivated and upwardly mobile workers who see the possibilities for advancement through co-sponsored classes.

Convenience is another incentive provided by co-sponsored classes. Students do not have to pay transportation costs or take long bus rides. Sometimes co-sponsors arrange for child care. Easy access to groups of friends, which makes for friendly and supportive learning situations, are added social and educational benefits.

Co-sponsoring with ABE does not always come up smelling like roses. In a New England hospital, for example, the entire working schedule for custodial staff had to be revised to permit employees who required ABE instruction to attend classes on a released-time basis. Better educated workers who had to work longer to cover for participants became angry. Sometimes, too, supervisors oppose ABE due to fear of reduced productivity. Supervisors who oppose released time can become subsequent targets for worker animosity. When released time is given selectively, those not enjoying this benefit can come to resent it. Conversely, in one hospital where unskilled, non-English speaking employees were required to take ABE classes, they became offended at being singled out and felt punished for their ignorance. Unions sometimes demand that employees be paid when engaged in job-related training, forcing the issue on management of whether to offer released time or get out of the ABE game altogether.

The decision to incur released time costs and the inconvenience of readjusting normal operations to accommodate ABE can precipitate strife within the organization. When classes involve no released time and little inconvenience, costs to the co-sponsor are low. The greater the investment of the employer co-sponsor, the greater the benefits to ABE.

A good deal depends on who initiates the class in the co-sponsoring organization. If he is influentially placed and committed to the

program, chances are things will work out well. If, however, he is the only one with such commitment, sustaining a relationship can become dependent upon him. When such a lone supporter leaves, ABE programs have found themselves in jeopardy of being abandoned.

Co-sponsorship arrangements by and large prove mutually satisfactory and tend to be terminated either when the need for them is substantially met in the eyes of the co-sponsor or when attendance falls and remains below an established minimum.

Community Liaison Staff

Directors allocate funds for staff to work in community liaison if they feel it necessary to recruit participants,* if they are oriented toward entrepreneurial community service, and if they can enjoy relative freedom from rigid administrative and budgetary constraints. The more traditional school administrator frequently avows that every cent must go into teacher salaries to strengthen his program. Local priorities in target populations can dictate recruitment needs. In a New England city, the director feels the education of hard-to-reach blacks is the proper function of CAP agencies; because a large local Spanish-speaking population is his priority, he finds the need for recruiters able to work with this group.

Community liaison staff fall into one of several types. About a third of the urban directors responding to the national survey employed community liaison personnel. Often the person hired is a professional who fulfills the function as a relatively minor aspect of his job, which is primarily administrative. He is frequently assigned specific liaison tasks, such as contacting community organizations or contacting the media and preparing advertising copy or other materials. Over 40 percent of the urban directors employ indigenous community personnel on a part-time basis as recruiters. Some use ABE graduates for this.

A third type of liaison person is the part-timer whose primary occupation is in some complementary community work, like a social worker or CAP community organizer. Still another variety of community liaison worker is the teacher or counselor from within the ABE program who voluntarily becomes involved in following up on

*About a third of the urban directors place heavy reliance upon agency referrals and direct recruitment by ABE staff. Almost all who use them rate these two practices as *very* effective. Less than half the directors make intensive use of mass media announcements, flyers, posters and mailings, and only one in five rates these recruitment practices as very effective.

dropouts, recruiting, giving feedback on how the community likes ABE, serving as referral agent with other agencies and sometimes as spokesman for groups of participants who do not speak English well in dealing with other agencies.

Still another type of voluntary liaison person comes from other agencies or groups, like VISTA volunteers who recruit through target population groups in Tucson, or semi-retired Senior Aides who recruit in Providence, or neighborhood church workers who organize ABE classes for specific groups with whom they work.

Detroit has hired as many as seventy indigenous community people for ten hours a week during enrollment periods, five paraprofessionals who participate in the program throughout the year, and a half-time professional to contact corporation executives, agencies, and organizations throughout the city. Saint Louis has used twenty part-time neighborhood recruiters.

Much important liaison work is performed by the director himself, so his organizational associations become significant. Most serve on coordinating bodies such as Model Cities advisory groups and community councils. In a smaller Eastern city the ABE director met the head of a Puerto Rican center at a meeting of the local Advisory Board on Urban Education, and a co-sponsored program resulted. The director's participation in community-wide coordinating agencies is often profitable in this way.

Directors generally do a lot of speaking before civic and fraternal groups to build community support for their programs. Most feel the general public image of ABE is mildly positive, but that there is not a great deal of awareness about the program. These contacts can pay off for ABE in tangible ways. In a large Southern city the ABE director met a member of a local association of industrial personnel managers who invited her to a meeting with his professional group. Six co-sponsored programs resulted. Civic and fraternal groups have given funds for such projects as translating materials into Braille, an international pot luck supper for ABE students, and a graduation dinner. A director's own group memberships have proven useful for ABE. Church contacts are often responsible for co-sponsored programs.

Community liaison staff are almost never employed on a full-time basis to do community work. When teachers are in short supply the liaison man may be assigned to recruit them, but the major function of liaison is recruiting participants, opening new classes and following up on dropouts. Professionals hired as community liaison staff are almost never permitted to spend most of their time in the community. They are found to be primarily involved as super-

visors, audiovisual technicians, school bus monitors, doormen, record clerks, in-service trainers, and general administrative aides. Most are hired to give directors a professional who can be used flexibly as needed, inasmuch as teachers and supervisors have fixed responsibilities and are often unable or unwilling to be used to fill miscellaneous jobs that need doing. As a result, most community liaison staff are found devoting less than a third of their time to community work. Student recruitment is the major effort in the community; following up on dropouts is given much less emphasis. Three-fifths of urban directors have never even conducted a study to find out who drops out and why. Liaison staff are seldom used to get feedback on how the community feels ABE is meeting student needs or fulfilling an important function for its target populations.

Four factors differentiate how these hustlers for ABE function in the community. These include (1) the degree of administrative formality under which they operate, (2) whether or not they are themselves residents of the neighborhood or members of the target group with which they work, (3) whether their major occupation is community work, and (4) whether they see their job as primarily conveying information about the program or as counseling potential students.

One approach to community liaison involves more formal organizational planning and administrative control. A plan is formulated involving some combination of advertising, direct recruitment, and dropout follow-up. A search is made to find personnel to fill the liaison positions created to implement these plans, then the personnel are employed and given specific assignments. Liaison staff operating within this pattern are deployed on a city-wide basis to work with the ABE target population as a whole. Specific tasks are assigned, sometimes on a daily basis, with frequent written reports required summarizing the work undertaken. Such liaison workers may not be known to the community in which they work. Many do not have other occupations that involve them in community work.

This formal approach to community liaison is used in one Eastern city where the ABE director is also in charge of a Department of Labor demonstration project designed to give meaningful employment to low-income, retired, older adults. One day they may be directed to distribute flyers in supermarkets in target areas, the next to follow up on a list of dropouts, and the next to contact personnel managers in industrial concerns to identify potential ABE students and distribute promotional materials. These liaison workers, none of whom are known in the communities in which

they work or have complementary occupations, make daily written reports of their activity. Major emphasis is on disseminating information about the ABE program.

The formal approach to liaison work has obvious limitations, but it does allow a director to cover more territory with less manpower, and no neighborhood is neglected because a suitable local person cannot be found to work there. The approach requires a lot of supervisorial and administrative time.

At the other extreme is the informal model, in which the director identifies indigenous personnel already working in a specific community or neighborhood in one role or another. Social workers or their aides, community organizers, ministers and nuns, teachers and teacher aides, and many others have been found useful. These people are employed as liaison personnel for ABE, oriented to the goals and operation of the program and often permitted to operate in their communities in their own manner. Specific assignments are seldom given. Work for ABE is performed as a complement to community work they have already demonstrated proficiency at doing and exploits an established network of contacts. Liaison personnel who operate informally are for obvious reasons invariably assigned to work in specific geographical areas corresponding to their particular interests, ethnicity, or employment situation. Social workers work in their social work districts, teachers of relocated Appalachians with that group, blacks in black neighborhoods, and so on.

Liaison persons of this type are more likely to become involved in the lives of potential ABE students and dropouts — to help them cope with frustrating problems of child care, get eye-glasses or a physical, arrange transportation, find a job, or deal with welfare agencies. This counseling involvement is a logical extension of their principal occupation, which is usually social-welfare oriented. They are often quite expert at helping their own community people cope with the "system." In their complementary occupation they often have established a network of relationships with social agencies to which ABE students can be referred for supportive services and which refer those needing ABE to the liaison worker. In one Midwestern city, a liaison man who was also a social worker established a coordinating referral network among all agencies serving his neighborhood. Often liaison workers belong to community groups that are valuable sources of recruitment for ABE.

The informal model of community liaison allows for a saturation effort in specific neighborhoods or with specific target groups. A problem is the time required for counseling individuals and the

limited number who can be served in this manner. Another is the danger that the locally recruited worker may become caught up in the group infighting and intergroup struggles endemic to ghetto communities. Directors who use voluntary liaison personnel follow the informal mode since they have little leverage over volunteer workers.

Most liaison programs fall somewhere between the extremes of the formal-informal continuum, and the variables of community membership, complementary occupation, and degree of counseling involvement are found in varying combination in most programs. Some cities use both formal and informal approaches, with different kinds of liaison personnel involved in each.

Few liaison workers get involved in negotiating co-sponsorship arrangements. They may contact organizations or talk before community groups to foster recruitment, but much of their work in the community is devoted to a one-to-one relationship with potential students and with dropouts. This work is often hindered by the necessity of contacting working individuals in the evening and in areas having high rates of street crime. The limited number who can be reached sometimes makes investment in this kind of liaison prohibitive. Recruitment is primarily by door-to-door canvass or by working through community groups; dropouts are followed up by going to their homes, by telephone or letter.

In most cities, liaison personnel report directly to the ABE director. In Detroit, community aides report to five regional coordinators. In Yonkers, the guidance counselor notifies liaison personnel of recent dropouts and assigns them to follow-up duties. But this is unusual. There is generally little coordination in the work of counselors or teachers with liaison staff in relationship to their community work. This is true in part because community work is conducted sporadically, and continuing liaison programs were often established as an afterthought in ABE so that liaison staff tend to fall through the cracks in the organizational structure.

The seasonal and short-term requirements of recruitment militate against the development of a cadre of professional specialists in community work. Directors want help when a new class is forming or one is in danger of folding because of attendance attrition, in September when classes are beginning, and in January when the weather can keep students away. At other times directors want help in handling miscellaneous administrative duties. A budget line with funds earmarked for recruitment will be used for other things when directors are not pressed for new participants. There is

little or no community liaison training in ABE. Liaison staff lack a common background with the advantages of professional socialization with others specializing in community work. They tend, in consequence, to define their own roles.

Hustlers in ABE are marginal people in a marginal game. As ABE grows up, it is likely that program focus will increasingly be placed on what happens to participants passing out of the program. Then the hustler's star may rise. It is symptomatic that three-fourths of the urban directors say that ABE should incorporate both vocational counseling and job placement services, although only a third provide them now. As programs mature, the emphasis may be less on hustling the players themselves and more on hustling for them.

Sites and Facilities

The way a program is organized to respond to its community needs will be profoundly influenced by what site and facility options are open to the ABE director and his decisions about how to use them. A common urban pattern is to locate about half the ABE classes in widely scattered public school buildings, usually with only one or a few classes offered in any one site. Often programs have a centralized location, sometimes primarily reserved for ABE, at which both day and evening classes are concentrated. This clustering of classes occurs most frequently in smaller cities and is less common in programs with a relatively higher non-white student population.

The director's role in dealing with dynamic interrelationships is illustrated by the issue of the relative balance between scatter and cluster of urban ABE programs. He and his staff must decide on the emphasis and approach to use in attracting students and must consider the difference that class location will be likely to make. They must also anticipate the impact of class location on enhancing and individualizing instruction, on staff recruitment, on the provision of supporting services and materials, and on counseling and follow-up services. As the ABE unit, or any organization, develops from its initial establishment, through a growth period, to a more stable period of operation, there is a shift in the types of critical problems and decisions that confront administrators.

Arrangements for facilities are related to funding patterns. For instance, when the local matching contribution is minimal and "in kind" it often takes the form of evening use of school facilities. Sources and guidelines for funding also influence arrangements with students, staff, and cooperating groups. Most urban ABE programs

depend heavily on federal funds. Obtaining and maintaining these funds, sometimes from as many as half a dozen sources, typically entails a major and continuing effort by the ABE director and his staff. Proposals must be written, various persons contacted, and reports prepared. There are often strings attached regarding purposes to be served and target populations to be reached. When substantial money from the local ABE budget is used to pay for facilities, it usually involves a building to be used primarily for ABE classes and activities.

Facilities serve two major purposes. One is to promote the educational program. In practice facilities vary greatly in the extent to which they encourage discussion, individualized study, informal contact between students and teachers, and the provision of supporting services such as counseling and placement. The second purpose of facilities is to encourage undereducated adults to attend initially. Accessibility and attractiveness to prospective students are of great importance. Scattered locations usually involve use of other people's facilities, an arrangement that makes their part-time use by the ABE program vulnerable to displacement. However, scattered locations can be more accessible to prospective students and thus an aid to recruitment. Most of a director's efforts to arrange for scattered facilities are directed toward school administrators and representatives of such co-sponsoring organizations as churches, employers, and neighborhood groups.

Much depends on the orientation of the local director regarding the intended target population. If his intent is to reach the most people with available resources, then the recruitment approach is typically a "creaming" operation — attracting students who have internalized typical middle-class values, who are attracted by formal recruitment procedures and by word-of-mouth, who are motivated to participate, and who function relatively well in formal educational settings. Creaming fits most naturally with the part-time use of school facilities. However, if the intent is to reach the harder-to-reach, then the recruitment approach is typically one of "crumbing" — picking up those who will otherwise be left behind. To reach the harder-to-reach requires a recruitment approach that fits the life style of those less educated and more isolated. For this target population, facilities must be accessible and familiar. In practice, crumbing has been associated with scattered facilities, often in non-school locations. This approach frequently emphasizes working with co-sponsors who already have contact with the harder-to-reach. Employment and welfare agencies, which refer undereducated adults to the ABE program, are valuable allies.

Choosing the Turf

Many directors use two criteria to decide on facilities — influence on learning and maintenance of enrollments. When a new program is being started, these criteria may appear to be in conflict, because clustered facilities appear to favor learning, and scattered facilities seem to favor recruitment. As the program gets rolling, most directors work out a combination of facilities that meet both criteria relatively well. This is helped by the typical shift regarding enrollment from attracting to retaining students. The location of facilities is, of course, not the only influence on enrollments. Many other practices contribute: transportation arrangements, extension of time periods when facilities are open, continuous enrollment, using names like "adult learning center" to counteract negative stereotypes, encouraging students to set "realistic" aspirations, follow-up efforts to reduce absenteeism, child care service, job counseling and placement, and the use of social events and ceremonies.

In addition to being physically close in terms of traveling time, the scattered location usually fits in with the life style of the students. Although some upwardly mobile students may prefer a "real school," many harder-to-reach adults prefer the more familiar and informal surroundings of most scattered sites. Many classes are in churches, housing projects, at the job, or in offices of ethnic neighborhood organizations. The very success in recruitment of harder-to-reach adults compounds the problem of the scattered site. Outreach classes with the greatest diversity of students and the more difficult learning problems, typically have the fewest instructional resources upon which to draw. Those located in elementary schools have the additional disadvantages of a negative stereotype for many undereducated adults and limited control of the space by the ABE program.

ABE classes may be clustered in one or more locations at which several classes are conducted. There are many potential advantages of the clustered location for ABE. The concentration of students is great enough to warrant provision of highly specialized equipment, materials, and staff, including a well-equipped learning center. Because of the concentration of students and classes, the clustered facility is open for many hours a week, which allows each student to follow a highly individualized pattern of participation regarding extent, pacing, and distribution of time spent. In addition the student can more readily make changes in the level or subject matter of the class or classes in which he is enrolled when they are held in the same location and in many instances at the same day and

time. A variety of supporting services such as counseling, placement, and tutoring can be provided as well.

In a few programs, personnel associated with related programs are connected with the clustered location, which broadens the base of resources. Teachers are helped to do what they do best. They can specialize, learn from each other, and refer students to other teachers. Students and staff can get to know each other better, and students can be encouraged by knowing about other students who are succeeding in the program. The clustered location also makes it easier to maintain records and control over the program which allows such adjustments as fitting attendance fluctuations to scheduling of teachers, arranging followup of students who drop out, or providing for evaluation feedback. Additional advantages include convenience in the provision of custodial and security services in the building, and the provision of certain transportation arrangements, such as a special bus.

There is, however, one major disadvantage of the clustered location. Centralized locations tend to be less accessible because of traveling problems and because of the problems that some undereducated adults confront when they try to cope with a large, complex, and unfamiliar institution. A central task in organizing the action is maintaining a balance of cluster and scatter in locating classes.

Some ABE programs have worked out effective ways to combine clustered and scattered facilities. One combination is a learning center that includes both standard classes and arrangements for individualized instruction with feeder classes in outreach locations near where the target population lives and works. There are many types of outreach classes. Some differ little from a class in a learning center except for the greater diversity of students. Some are a series of highly informal sessions, such as home tutoring by volunteers or the "armchair" classes discussed in Chapter 2. By contrast, the feeder class is designed to work with new students in a familiar and convenient setting, often a living room, until they are ready to transfer to a learning center. Feeder classes may be established with co-sponsors or neighborhood groups through which harder to reach students may be recruited. When teachers and aides associated with the learning center are rotated as staff for feeder classes, the problem of student adjustment after transfer is minimized.

In terms of staff, clustered and scattered locations make a difference. Although it would be possible for full-time ABE teachers to teach in scattered sites, almost all of those who do teach outreach

classes are employed part-time. Many part-time teachers in scattered sites have little contact with other ABE staff, especially in larger cities where teachers sometimes go for months without direct contact with anyone associated with the ABE program except the students. In clustered sites, with some full-time teachers and greater interaction among teachers, support staff, and administrators, there is much greater program cohesiveness. Indeed, some of the advantages attributed to full-time teachers are primarily the result of the clustered sites at which they usually work. Examples include specialization of functions, more homogeneous classes, and better organization. Moreover, the clustered site provides an opportunity for the ABE administrator to exercise both leadership in program development and greater control over his operation. Working with teachers to develop and adapt instructional materials, improve teaching strategies, and individualize instruction becomes more feasible for administrators at a clustered site. Just as locating the action is often the key to the success of a game of chance, decisions about locations and facilities can make a major difference in operating an ABE program.

Chapter 8

Improving The Odds

There are many who want to change the rules of the ABE game to give the players better odds. There are plenty of suggestions. Persuasive theorists would politicize adult basic education to create a *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*[1] designed to motivate learners by making them more fully aware of the political, economic, and social forces structuring their disadvantaged situation. Some educators want to vocationalize ABE by making it the handmaiden of job training. Others would socialize it by integration into a comprehensive program of social services. Still others would academize it by giving the whole program to the community colleges that already operate it in several states.

Our research has not examined alternatives to the public schools. But in setting out to capture the evolving, multi-dimensional reality of ABE, we inevitably encountered recurrent problems. These constitute a set of action imperatives for those responsible for translating program intent into actual practice. In reviewing findings that suggest needed action, an assumption is made that the principal mandate for Title III and successor legislation will continue to be vested in the public schools and to some extent the community colleges. Even if this were not the case, many of the same problems would persist. However, this is not a brief for the present organizational arrangement as opposed to others. The question of alternative organizational sponsorship exceeds the limits on how far these re-

search findings may be used to base specific operational prescriptions for improving practice.

Different Games for Different Players

Players come in rich variety and for many reasons. Some come looking for action, others have to be shilled into the game. Some want to play one game, some another. Beginners play against seasoned players in the same game for different pots. Some play continuously, others sporadically.

It is also abundantly clear that some play against better odds than others. This is illustrated by contrasting ESL with classes for the native-born students. It costs more to operate games for them because of smaller class size and greater need for aides to individualize instruction. Hence the trend in many cities for ESL to displace BEd classes.

The numbers game directors play obscures fundamental differences within their programs. A one-sided competition results which penalizes those who push education for the native born. But most try to maintain a balance among the different groups of students who should be in ABE. Few directors want their students limited only to those working at seventh or eighth grade levels or in ESL.

The problem with first come-first served is that it puts ABE in the grip of a reverse Gresham's law: Students with higher enrollment and retention rates are good currency, and the good displaces the bad. Displacement is most rapid when enrollment increases faster than funding. In many communities the crunch comes when few of the least educated and poorest get into the action. It would be better to distinguish systematically between major target groups in program planning, development and reporting. Which target groups should be included will vary from community to community. Most give at least lip service priority to the least educated, most disadvantaged and poorest—the "hard core." Others may include working mothers, high school dropouts, unemployed men, the aged, Indians or the foreign born.

One of the best ways to distinguish between major target groups is to set up a program for each. If you decide to work with the least educated group and devote, say, a quarter of your effort over several years to doing so, you plan accordingly. This means projecting a budget especially for this purpose which reflects the unique problems of recruitment, staffing, instruction and related services necessary for getting this group into the program and moving participants ahead to third grade level and beyond. Supervisory and teaching

staff, aides and counselors and instructional methods all need to be selected to fit the distinctive needs of the hardest-to-reach.

Unit costs will be relatively high; it simply costs more for the intensive, specialized and individualized service required to recruit, educate and retain the least educated. Earmarked funds with entirely different standards for judging program progress are indispensable. Costs and gains of such programs should be compared with similar efforts targeted on comparable groups, not with programs with participants at intermediate or advanced levels of instruction or in ESL classes. The remainder of the ABE program may take a different tack with priority assigned to involving the largest number of players at lowest cost per participant. This means the relatively more motivated, upwardly mobile and middle-class oriented.

The special program to involve hard-core students might be established as a pre-literacy feeder effort or as parallel to existing courses. It may be operated through the schools or contracted out to community organizations already working with this target group. There is reason to believe such programs would be enhanced if they can be made an integral part of a comprehensive program of social services, job training and actual employment. When feeder or parallel programs are instituted within the school system, special dispensation to assure flexibility is essential. The several federally funded demonstration projects designed to work with hard-core students need careful study to determine whether their organization, staffing and instructional methods worked; whether, in fact, they recruited and retained hardcore students; and whether similar costly and unorthodox efforts can be institutionalized within the school or community college system.

Setting up separate programs for special groups of students requires keeping separate books on them at local, state and federal levels. Most directors act as though a direct relationship exists between reported enrollment and level of funding. Clarifying the ambiguity surrounding this relationship will mitigate many of the least desirable effects of the numbers game. This will be especially true if differentiated reporting systems can be established to protect directors who are now penalized for setting as priorities hard-core target populations. Otherwise, the reporting system encourages a body count regardless of whether high priority target groups are being adequately served.

In the long run, students would get better odds by separate reporting of enrollment and attendance and by setting different standards for evaluating program effectiveness in beginning level classes, ESL classes, centralized vs. outreach classes, and classes in "hard-

to-reach" neighborhoods. Beginning classes should be judged against other beginning classes, outreach classes against outreach classes, BEd classes against BEd classes. Such bookkeeping will preserve justifiably high-risk, high-cost programs from being overwhelmed by pressures for a higher total body count.

Differentiating Recruitment Effort

The characteristics of ABE's clientele partly reflect the program's recruitment and retention practices. In reality, the ABE game attempts to attract as many players as possible with available funds, an approach of "getting the most bang for a buck," more delicately referred to as "reaching the most." In reaching the most, the middle-class oriented ways of attracting participants are relatively effective. Some programs also make a special effort to attract a substantial number of the poorest and least educated. It appears that adults have different patterns of seeking information and require different recruitment efforts.

In efforts to "reach the most," those most readily attracted are similar to the middle-class adults who typically participate in adult education. Many ABE programs focus on this target population because the investment in recruitment yields more people enrolling, persisting, and progressing faster. The standard recruitment method is word-of-mouth by satisfied students. Occasionally students are encouraged to distribute flyers, talk to groups, or invite acquaintances to attend the ABE program—but fewer of the less educated know an ABE student. Many ABE operators encourage employers, churches, welfare, and employment agencies to refer undereducated adults to the ABE program—but fewer of the less educated take advice from other than close friends. Some directors arrange for co-sponsorship of ABE classes with employers or churches so that membership in the co-sponsoring organization facilitates entry into ABE—but fewer of the less educated are associated with formal organizations. Many directors use mass media, such as newspaper articles or radio announcements, to let undereducated adults know about the ABE program—but fewer of the less educated attend to mass media for instrumental purposes, using the media instead almost exclusively for entertainment.

It is therefore obvious that, to reach the harder-to-reach, different recruitment methods are needed. One of the most promising is the organization of "vestibule activities," in which the primary purpose is to increase readiness for ABE classes. The objective of the vestibule activity—examples of which include vocational counseling and informal living room learning groups—is achieved when the

adult successfully begins an ABE class. A few pioneering programs have had success with "armchair" classes in the homes of students, sometimes using indigenous aides as recruiters and instructors.

In general, the use of recruiters has produced mixed results. In some ABE programs door-to-door recruiters produced few students who continued in the program. In others, however, paid paraprofessionals were successful in establishing contact with potential students who enrolled and persisted in the program. The role is similar to that of the block or street worker associated with some CAP agencies.

Another method is to relate ABE participation to programs and services in which the undereducated adult is a recipient, such as welfare or employment. An example is New York State's Welfare Education Program. Often this results in more clearly establishing ABE as a step toward a tangible goal and sometimes provides a stipend for participants — a small stake for playing the game.

Two other small stakes should significantly increase enrollment and rates of retention. One is the introduction of child-care facilities or allowances. Women with young children constitute a major segment of ABE's student body. It is not uncommon for mothers to bring small children to class. Child-care facilities would also introduce the possibilities for joint educational programming for mothers and their children and for the preparation of paraprofessionals to work in them. A second way to make the odds more attractive for students is to pay for their bus or subway fares. Many of the poorest do not attend because they cannot afford transportation costs.

A more effective program with better student and educator morale will result by providing continuity for the ABE program through high school. The present eighth-grade limit makes little sense, and is often violated in practice. In implementing regulations to extend ABE through high school, steps are required at federal, state, and local levels to ensure that the extended program is administered as an integral part of the present ABE unit.

Using Outreach and Feeder Classes

A major problem in ABE is reaching the student who is either unwilling or unable to enter classes outside his own neighborhood. These individuals are often the poorest and least educated. The program's response in many cities has been to set up classes in local community facilities, such as churches and public housing projects, to "reach out" to those who would not otherwise participate.

Usually, these classes are characterized by ethnic or racial homogeneity, extreme variation in achievement levels, and low and precarious enrollment.

Unusual variation in levels of student achievement and English language facility is perhaps the most serious obstacle to the educational effectiveness of community outreach classes. A common problem in ABE, it is exacerbated in outreach locations where it is not feasible to separate students on the basis of achievement. Even the best teachers find it difficult to deal with a class composed of students with widely varying backgrounds and needs. Under these conditions, classroom learning could be significantly enhanced by instruction on a small-group and individual basis. Consequently, community outreach classes should be given high priority in the assignment of aides and volunteers to provide the necessary assistance.

There has been a continuing debate about the relative advantages and disadvantages of community outreach classes. Advantages include (1) extension of ABE opportunities to the hardest to reach and most disadvantaged portion of the target population; (2) a learning environment enhanced by the social cohesion that results from common membership in a church or other organization; and (3) greater visibility for ABE in the community and broader community support. Among the disadvantages are (1) higher per-student cost; (2) problems of coordination, communication, and logistics; (3) poor facilities; (4) lack of instructional equipment and limited choice of materials; (4) lack of means for grouping students by achievement level; and (6) difficulty in providing counseling services.

Whether advantages outweigh disadvantages depends in large measure on local community conditions and the goals and educational philosophy of the local director and his staff. One seldom-used strategy is to establish an outreach program of temporary feeder classes to channel students to better equipped centralized locations after initial fears, misunderstandings about the program and other sources of resistance are overcome. This would entail a major emphasis on program orientation and counseling and would require recruitment of teachers with very special abilities.

There is also need for a different kind of feeder class to serve centralized, multi-class sites. Evidence from the teacher survey and interviews suggests that continuous enrollment of new students is seriously detrimental to effective teaching and learning. New students require an inordinate amount of the teacher's time. Moreover, they are seldom screened carefully and are often placed in an in-

appropriate class, compounding the problem. Latecomers often fail to catch up with the class, become discouraged, and drop out at a disproportionate rate. These problems could be mitigated by establishing a feeder class for late enrollees. The feeder class would enable accurate assessment of achievement level (or ability to speak English) as the basis for placement in an ongoing class at an appropriate time. It could also provide much-needed counseling and program orientation for latecomers. Because of student heterogeneity in achievement level and the need for intensive individual attention, priority in assignment of aides and volunteers should be given to these classes.

Co-Sponsoring and Community Liaison

Co-sponsorship is a potentially effective way to recruit participants and expand the ABE program, as well as extend it into the community and to reach many who might otherwise not participate. A significant educational advantage in many co-sponsored classes is greater group cohesion and support among students. Educational achievement is also likely to be greater in classes co-sponsored by employers in which there are external incentives and common or similar goals among students. Increased visibility in the community and a potent organizational constituency to voice community support for ABE are additional advantages.

The principal disadvantage of co-sponsorship is the substantial time and effort usually required to initiate and sustain the relationship. Not only are preliminary arrangements time consuming, but maintaining the relationship can be a formidable task requiring some diplomatic skill, particularly if problems develop between teachers and co-sponsors. Maintaining enrollment can also be a problem, particularly when dealing with small community organizations such as churches and CAP agencies. And when the co-sponsor is a large employer, such as a hospital or industry, it can be difficult to ensure uninterrupted class time or a permanent meeting place.

Many problems can be avoided or minimized if certain strategies are employed in the initial planning stage. For example, it is usually advantageous to negotiate agreements with senior personnel in the co-sponsoring organization, particularly if it is a large, bureaucratic organization such as a hospital, industrial firm, or government agency. Approval by high-ranking officials generally results in greater cooperation from operational level personnel, greater recognition of ABE, minimization of red tape, and elimination of delay necessitated by going up the chain of command.

It can also be helpful in initial planning with the co-sponsor to involve personnel at various levels in the organization who will have contact with ABE students and staff. Teachers should also be included. When participation in planning is not feasible, it is vitally important that details of the arrangement be communicated to teachers and relevant co-sponsor personnel. Consideration might also be given to including representatives of the adults who will participate in ABE in the planning. This may not be feasible — or acceptable — when the co-sponsor is a large employer, but it is often practicable when planning classes with indigenous community organizations. Involving participants is one way to ensure the relevance of ABE to their needs and interests and to foster commitment to the program.

The co-sponsor's active support can also be crucial to ABE's success. Co-sponsoring organizations should be urged to provide special incentives and rewards for members or employees who participate in ABE. A highly desirable but exceptional example is paid released time to attend class. Also desirable — and exceptional — is a commitment by the employer to consider successful "graduates" for job promotions. But even modest incentives or sanctions can be helpful. For example, ABE can be given visibility and prestige by a public statement of company recognition or a newsletter announcement. Leaders of community organizations can promote a positive image of ABE by stressing the special status of students and the accomplishment of completing the program.

Community liaison requires specialized knowledge of the target community, personal acceptability there, and skill in dealing effectively with people. The most desirable liaison persons, as has already been noted, are individuals whose primary occupations or former occupations complement the liaison role, such as welfare aides, ministers, or teachers. It is of great advantage, too, if liaison staff have roots or extensive contacts in the target community. Persons with backgrounds in complementary occupations are more likely to be skilled in working with people and familiar with the culture and problems of the community. They are not only "pretrained," but usually able to do ABE liaison work in the course of their regular employment. It is important that the liaison role be carefully defined and responsibilities spelled out. When this is not done, administrators tend to use liaison personnel for assignments unrelated to liaison work.

An important component of the liaison role requiring greater emphasis is feedback and evaluation. Often the director has little knowledge of what is going on in outreach classes. Liaison staff

can provide valuable feedback on such matters as relevance of classes to community needs and teacher competency. Provision should also be made for coordination between liaison staff, teachers, and counselors, particularly in matters related to community feedback and student recruitment and retention.

Improving Instruction

Common patterns of classroom dynamics constitute important norms for supervision and assessment of teacher performance and for the identification of staff development needs.

Major determinants that shape classroom interaction include the ubiquitous administrative pressure felt by the teacher to maintain attendance, absence of extrinsic incentives to deter dropouts, extreme diversity among students and their objectives, and the distinctive characteristics of educationally disadvantaged adults (fear and expectation of failure, lack of skill in how to learn, varied conceptions of time and punctuality, and so on).

These factors and the limited time spent in class produce a situation in which true groups, which can be used to foster learning through shared experience, to evolve shared values, and to support attitudinal change, are seldom formed; the process of socialization is attenuated. Teacher effort to create and use learning groups should be encouraged. And ABE's markedly relaxed set of classroom rules and conventions — the friendly and informal atmosphere — should also be encouraged. In many classes effectiveness of instruction will be a function of how well custodial, social, and social service functions are carried out. Teachers must be helped to perform these functions as an integral part of instruction.

Because students can enroll any time, usually with little or no screening, a major problem ensues — that of accommodating late starters and returning absentees. Teachers should be helped to handle this. And since students do not compete with each other and are almost never permitted to fail, skill in failure management or "buffering" is important to teacher performance and should be recognized as such. However, student performance will improve if there is continuous confidential feedback on achievement, including results of tests for those who wish to know their progress in relation to their past achievement. Most students want to know how they are doing in relation to their goals. This especially pertains to students at intermediate and advanced levels of instruction. The ideology of minimum failure should be less an ideology and more a teaching tactic, especially for new or beginning students and

others who require strong and continuing encouragement to offset fear of failure.

Students unable to "locate" themselves are often discouraged and confused. There is a special need for participant orientation in initial class meetings. Students often do not know what the program is about, where they fit into it, and what is expected of them. They often have goals that are vague and not well thought out. Most important, they are frightened and unsure of themselves. It is in the initial class meetings that the teacher's buffering functions are most needed.

In light of generally heavy dropout rates, teachers should be encouraged to innovate, to go beyond present instructional methods and content, which are heavily encrusted with the elementary school tradition of present-recite/test-correct. The modal pattern involves a teacher presentation or assignment followed in ESL by class-level drill, dialogue, or especially solicited or required individual response. BEd. classes are taught more frequently on an individual level. Teachers infrequently use small learning groups; practice and recitation are common functions when groups are used. Because teachers attend to the middle range of students and hope to deal with others on an individual basis, attrition in attendance of slower and more advanced students results. Teachers should draw from each other's experience in making a collective effort to best resolve this problem. In single-class sites heterogeneity makes individualization of instruction essential.

It is significant that ESL teachers are twice as likely as BEd teachers to rate variability in student skill levels and continuous enrollment as serious impediments to effective teaching. This reflects the prevalence of the traditional practice of teaching the class as a whole and starting everyone at the same time in the same place in a sequence of instruction. Individualized instruction, using small learning groups, teaching aides, and learning centers are priority needs.

Several innovative patterns of instruction have been identified and should be developed for broader use. One is that of the learning center, in which students are tested periodically and an individual work plan is prescribed and reformulated as necessary. There is usually poor communication between the center and classroom teachers in the program; probably teachers should rotate between center and classroom. For most students some combination of center with small group instruction is best, perhaps with an increasing proportion of time devoted to center work as they advance.

Another promising approach lets the students in a class dictate the order and pace of covering desired content rather than follow-

ing a logical order of topics as determined by the teacher or materials writer. Major concepts are covered in an order determined by student involvement in defining problems, illustrating concepts and testing meanings against their personal experience. Class interaction determines speed with which there is movement from topic to topic and in what order this is done.

A third pattern involves the teacher giving different assignments to small groups, some groups working with more or less difficult materials, and the teacher acting as a resource person and multigroup member. Students select which group they wish to go into. Friends are encouraged to stay together, and there is much socializing within the group. Individuals are encouraged and expected to complete their own assignments and have freedom to "do their own thing" as long as they do not create disturbances. The use of learning groups is of potential value for fostering attitude change. Use of discussion as an instructional method is rare in ABE; where used it usually evokes interest and involvement.

Armchair classes, home instruction, TV, and mobile learning labs are innovations of keen interest to adult educators. These promising departures from the traditional classroom approach need exploration through demonstration and analysis. When, for whom, under what circumstances, and for what objectives are they particularly appropriate?

Quality of instruction and student performance will be enhanced by employment of a specialist in curriculum and materials development and/or assignment of experienced teachers to a curriculum development team in lieu of teaching assignments. Teachers seldom prepare their own instructional materials. They are eclectic in using what is available. The preparation and adaptation of materials to the specific needs of their classes should be stressed when encouraging teachers to participate in the curriculum development process.

Using Aides in the Classroom

Paraprofessionals should be able and wiliing jacks-of-all-trades. Aides, as we have seen, have special value in coping with the major problems of attendance maintenance (by recruiting, contacting absentees, and baby sitting), and heterogeneity (by instructing subgroups and individuals), and the students' major problem of the continuing interruption of newcomers into the class (by teaching beginners).

In assessing the need for paraprofessionals to share teaching functions, priority should be given to heterogenous classes characterized by a wide range of achievement levels, and to classes in

which several subjects are taught. Here aides are useful for teaching sub-groups within a class or for individualizing instruction. These conditions are more apt to pertain to classes in decentralized locations and in BEd rather than ESL. Effective use of an aide for instruction will be in part a function of how the teacher allocates her time between class, sub-groups, and individuals and her pace of alternating among them. Instruction must be organized to optimally use the aide's time.

Paraprofessionals are most productively used in instructional roles when the teacher organizes her class into small groups or individual units. Teaching the class as a whole often relegates the aide to clerical help. It may be useful, therefore, to encourage teachers who can organize a classroom into small learning groups to teach the more heterogenous classes found in single-class sites and to provide them with instructional aides. And in respect to this, administrators should be cautious in assigning paid aides to classes in which volunteers are working in light of the tendency for the volunteers to assume instructional roles, often at the expense of the aide being used for this purpose.

To foster teacher-aide "fit" the teacher should be permitted to choose from among several candidates, and trial periods should be planned. Experienced aides should not be transferred unless necessary because of lack of "fit" or for other essential reasons.

The system should provide for upward mobility so that paraprofessionals can aspire and work toward becoming qualified ABE teachers. There should also be provision for salary increments and other incentives for those who wish to remain aides and prove to be valuable in these positions. In the absence of such provisions morale is damaged, and those hired as links to the local community tend to build a separate ideology predicated upon their sense of closeness and sensitivity to the point of view of students and their greater capacity to understand and relate to them — sometimes at the expense of the teacher's relationship with students. These aides can perform as vital communication links with students only if they do not alienate the teacher by being competitive for student approval or by serving in the role of their advocate. This problem should be worked through insofar as possible in the training of aides.

Paid and especially unpaid paraprofessionals should have their positions formalized with identification cards, certificates of completion of training, formal application procedures, interviews, and the amenities extended to teachers. These are often neglected, to the detriment of morale.

Factors relevant to the success of volunteers include amount of time available for service, prior training, teacher willingness to supervise and instruct, knowledge of native language of students, disposition to accept teacher's authority, warmth, and empathy; most of these factors also pertain to paid aides.

Curriculum Development

"Individualized instruction" is widely misconstrued to mean individualized prescriptions to meet program rather than learner goals. Many participants come to acquire specific skills for specific purposes but are shoehorned into a program oriented toward eighth grade or high school equivalency. Getting a driver's license or passing a specific civil service test requires specialized content and effort. Short-term goals should be legitimized and instruction modified accordingly.

Significant inclusion of education in urban living — consumer, health, family life, human relations, and civic education — as well as "coping" skills will be effected only if deliberate effort is made to set aside time for instruction. This is not being done in most ABE programs. Resources must be allocated for appropriate curricula and materials and ABE teachers and aides trained and encouraged in their use. Instruction in these areas is typically incidental and unsystematic. Content and skills involved are beyond the experience of most ABE teachers. If more emphasis is to be put on content other than the three R's, federal and state guidelines should be made more specific and funds locally allocated for curriculum development. Otherwise, ABE will be found wanting in evaluating progress toward meeting these implied, ambiguous objectives. "Education for urban living" must be defined in realistic, short-term program intentions if it is meant to be more than rhetoric.

Counseling

Short-term student goals are important. Many enroll with only vague notions of what the program has to offer and with unrealistic expectations of the time needed to reach their goals. Their goals must often be reformulated in terms of a series of realistic, progressive, short-term objectives. Greater emphasis is required on orientation and counseling of new and prospective students. Because a majority come for job-related reasons, a vigorous program of vocational counseling and job placement will significantly increase enrollment and reduce dropouts. Referral to public employment agencies has generally proven inadequate to the needs of this

particular group. A record of job placement and achievement of other short-term goals represents a tangible advantage in building program support.

Because students are often unclear about what the program can offer them and the time and effort required to meet their goals, once over their initial fears they require continuous private feedback of their short-term performance. And while they are likely to consult counselors about educational or vocational problems, they rarely ask assistance with more personal difficulties. It is often the case that counselors are white and the ABE students black or from another ethnic minority. This difference may limit communication. Moreover, the counselor may see a student no more than once or twice a year. In fact, the teacher is more likely to develop a familiarity with the out-of-school life of the student.

Problems relating to health, jobs, housing and family life appear to affect dropout rates as much or more than inadequacies in the program itself. Assistance is clearly needed to at least deal with those social problems amenable to change. Some argue that the counselor should be involved as little as possible with academic concerns, but should help students solve the problems that inhibit effective participation in the ABE class. Where counselor availability is limited, however, and teachers are better able to understand students' out-of-school problems, there are obvious implications for greater teacher involvement in the counseling process.

Teachers often do not have time to familiarize themselves with various social service and health resources in their students' communities. Perhaps the counselor's role in many programs could become one of resource trainer and backstop for the classroom teacher, making it possible for the teacher to more effectively assume the counseling function.

There will also be an increase in retention and in student performance in multiclass sites if responsibility for screening and placement is assigned to one or more qualified persons and students are placed in appropriate classes based upon interview and assessment (that is, by having them work with graded course materials as a performance test or by administering a simple diagnostic test).

ABE programs almost never follow up on those leaving the program to determine what they are doing. There appears to be a good deal of movement in and out and back into the program over extended periods of time. Procedures for getting dependable feedback from dropouts and graduates are essential for program improvement. Aides may be used for such information gathering.

Much more emphasis should be given at all levels of ABE to the transition from the program into jobs, job training, and high school equivalency programs.

Planning Staff Development

Teacher performance will be most enhanced by training that focuses upon analysis of actual classroom performance with opportunity for practice and feedback in the specific skill areas identified in this study. ABE teachers need guided practice in personalizing abstract ideas and in using learning groups, discussion, and other methods of adult education to evoke student involvement. How to involve and motivate in the first and early meetings, ask questions, teach "coping" skills (including those involved in learning), prepare instructional materials, and innovate in various instructional approaches are training priorities. Video-tapes of ABE classroom instruction can be invaluable in helping teachers to learn to analyze commonalities and variations in the organization of instruction, in methods of mediating content with learner experience, in patterns of social interaction, and the mechanisms of failure management and control. "Understanding the student population"—another universal priority—should consist of fewer generalized insights about the culture of poverty from the literature and more of an inquiry arising out of observed classroom behavior. Otherwise there is a danger of substituting one set of stereotypes for another.

Teachers and paraprofessionals should be trained for complementarity—teachers how to organize instruction for the optimal use of paraprofessionals, paraprofessionals how to perform functions to fit into the plan. Both should become familiar with alternative ways of organizing instruction, and aides should be trained to assume appropriate roles as different styles of teaching are encountered.

Many training programs for aides are inadequate because they tend to establish a single model for aide performance when there is great variety in teacher styles, requiring different mixes of roles on the part of paraprofessionals. Paraprofessionals should be trained as jacks-of-all-trades to assure flexibility. Again, videotapes of classrooms illustrating how an aide functions in various situations and notes from classroom observation can be useful. Pre-service training can usefully include orientation to ABE and the schools, student needs, materials and equipment and a frank discussion of common problems. A special effort should be made to build spirit and enthusiasm for work in the program. Training should be subsequently developed around common problems encountered by aides in their work. The process should be continuous, and should involve su-

pervisors and experienced teachers. Whenever possible, training should include the teacher with whom the aide is working.

Continuing in-service training — with released time — for teachers, supervisors and counselors should be specifically related to the distinctive problems of ABE and its students. Staff development teams involving master teachers and instructional supervisors could prove useful. In multi-class sites, a master teacher, with a lightened teaching load, could perform in an instructional supervisory role, freeing regular supervisors to give more attention to decentralized classes.

Coaching and participation of teachers in curriculum development may be legitimately used as part of staff development when carefully planned and assessed as in-service education. The practice of placing a new teacher in the classroom of an experienced teacher should also be assessed as a component of a program's in-service education effort. Staff development might profitably include assignment of experienced teachers to a curriculum development project to develop materials in lieu of teaching assignments.

Training of ABE teachers will be improved and the program professionalized by the collaborative development by professors of adult education and ABE professionals of university programs with special emphasis on supervised field experience. There should be built-in salary, time in lieu of teaching, or employment preference incentives for teachers to participate. The program should be related to on-going in-service training conducted by the various school systems. Universities should develop continuing training, consultation, demonstration, materials development, action research, and operational analysis services for local ABE programs through cooperative contracts with several districts. Such an arrangement might be established on a demonstration basis to test its value, and with states or cities agreeing to assume increasing proportions of the cost as direct federal support is phased out over time.

Many ABE directors are reluctant to release teachers from classroom duty for training and materials development assignments. The rationalization is that doing so would "rob the students." But our research reveals high dropout rates, the prevalence of dysfunctional teaching methods, and a dearth of high quality instructional materials. In no other program in the public schools is there greater need to professionalize instruction by making it functional and relevant to the needs of a specialized student body. Teachers, the organization of instruction, teaching methods, curricula, and instructional materials are all borrowed with little adaptation from programs de-

signed for a totally different population. Directors are penny wise and pound foolish to resist allocating resources for staff development.

Analyzing the Operation

To improve program practice it is essential that planners have a dependable normative description of ABE program practice, classroom interaction, and the perspectives of those involved. Both modal and innovative patterns should be included in this description. In the absence of such qualitative benchmarks, measurement techniques are often indiscriminately used to measure only those aspects of program development most amenable to quantification. Qualitative factors of evolving interaction—critical to program success—are often ignored. "Objectives" or program intents are seldom modified by evaluators to reflect subsequent realities of implementation. "Instruments" are devised to study arbitrarily selected aspects of the program, thereby displacing less tangible objectives. How and by whom shall crucial questions of the priority and order of program consequences be decided? This is usually quite arbitrarily done by the external evaluator. Preoccupation with program "output" detracts from needed assessment of the development of organizational capability to mount and sustain ABE programs.

Administrators need a management information system that encompasses qualitative factors in program development. Their internal operational analyses should involve a continuous flow of comparative data on classroom interaction and on how students and teachers see the program and their relation to it. From such data common problems can be identified, policy and program priorities soundly established, staff development planned with dependable knowledge of current classroom practice, and innovations identified. When combined with evaluative measurement of program outcomes, the administrator would know not only whether his program is producing gains but why—and how to improve on them.

A partial answer may be found in a mode of program analysis that focuses on ascertaining the gaps (1) between intent of administrators and teachers and actual practice in the key decision-making areas of staffing, recruitment, instruction, co-sponsorship, in-service education, and goal setting; (2) among administrators, among teachers, and between the two groups in expectations pertaining to these areas; and (3) between program practice and the emerging set of norms in these areas evolving out of this study and the experience of others as found in the professional literature

of adult basic education. Intent is established primarily through structured interviews, actual practice through questionnaires, review of records, and classroom observation.*

Discrepancies between intent and practice and between the perspectives of those involved can identify real and potential operating problems and provide a foundation for planning. Detailed inquiry into these initial areas of decision making also tends to have the salutary side effect of forcing planners to rationalize decision making.

Other Ways to Up the Odds

There is compelling evidence that a more coherent, sophisticated, and aggressively developed program results from the employment in ABE of professionally trained adult educators as full-time directors.** Nothing will contribute more directly to the professionalization and impetus of the national movement than such an emphasis.

Provision should be made for administrative continuity in extension of the ABE program through high school. In implementing plans to extend the program through high school, those responsible must beware of the danger of transforming ABE into a high school preparatory course. Students in ABE have a wide variety of other legitimate objectives that need to be given increased program emphasis. There is no reason, too, why adults enrolled in the public schools should not receive the same benefits — counseling, health services, transportation, and so on, available to other, young students.

The fact that most ABE funds come from the federal government should free educators from many of the most confining local constraints to innovate, experiment, and give the kind of creative leadership not always possible in public school settings.

Thus far, the institutional marginality of ABE and a characteristic overextension of resources in the effort to maximize service have seriously inhibited development of innovative program practices.

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*See the authors' *An Evaluation Guide for Adult Basic Education Programs.* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1974.)

**A recent study found that 69 percent of directors who scored high on a professionalism measure headed programs rated highly innovative, whereas only 18 percent who scored low on professionalism headed innovative programs. See Gordon G. Darkenwald, *et al., Problems of Dissemination and Use of Innovations in Adult Basic Education* (New York: Center for Adult Education, Columbia University, 1974), Chapt.4.

Moreover, innovation in ABE tends to occur in isolation. Teachers have little detailed familiarity with effective practices in other classrooms, and directors have limited knowledge of effective program practices in other cities. During this time of consolidation following ABE's initial growth period, there should be increased concern for qualitative improvement. ABE programs need systematic procedures to identify promising innovative practices and to institutionalize the most effective. This is especially true of results of research and demonstration projects. Priorities should be set within a strategy of comprehensive development, and vigorously implemented state, regional and national plans are urgently needed for evaluation and dissemination of innovations.[2]

One Small Step for Man

The spectre of the loser and the thousands who will never be given the chance to play makes ABE the sudden death game that it is for committed educators. The mocking laugh of an ancient enemy echoes in the words of William J. Lee, an eighty-three year old nursing home patient:

> "I guess I lived all these years without reading, didn't I?" he asked with some defiance. "I guess I made it O.K., didn't I? I guess I can make it the rest of the way, can't I?"
>
> He glanced around his small room, eyeing the mementos of life spent in poverty as a dirt farmer, a dishwasher, a short-order cook, and, finally, a janitor.
>
> "After all," he concluded, "a man's got a right not to read, ain't that right?"[3]

If we rage, it is at our impotence. If we weep, it is because we know for whom the bell tolls.

NOTES

1. Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970.) This seminal work describes uses of adult basic education as catalyst for a radical transformation of society. It draws on the author's experience working with illiterates in Brazil and Chile.
2. Two recent publications address these points. See Jack Mezirow and Gladys Irish, *Priorities for Experimentation and Development in Adult Basic Education* (New York: Center for Adult Education, Columbia University, 1974) and Gordon G. Darkenwald, et al., *Problems of Dissemination and Use of Innovations in Adult Basic Education* (New York: Center for Adult Education, Columbia University, 1974).
3. Interview in *The New York Times*, July 19, 1971.

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Last Gamble on Education

Dynamics of Adult Basic Education

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